Adult Women Returnees in the UK and Taiwan: 
A Comparative Study

by

Chia-Ming YEN

University of Surrey
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Abstract

The central purpose of this thesis is to analyse changes of the barriers and opportunities for adult women returnees to education from the UK and Taiwan. The data presented were derived from six institutions in the two nations.

The thesis demonstrates the ways in which globalisation as a driving force affected the women’s lives in Taiwan regardless age cohorts. It is argued that women’s lives are convergent due to the effect of globalisation in terms of the barriers and opportunities when returning to learn in a higher education institution. The thesis then focuses on the changes of social structure in higher education expansion, the changes of family ideology and gender inequality. The theoretical framework draws upon the comparison in which women are examined between the countries and across each nation. Further, the theoretical concepts of situational, dispositional and structural barriers are adopted from Patricia K. Cross to examine the changes of women returnees’ barriers and opportunities.

The research worked with five age cohorts from the two nations in total, and found that women’s lives tend to be convergent between the UK and Taiwan regardless of age, possibly because Taiwan may have developed faster and caught up with the UK due to rapid developments in its social and economic process. However, cultural resistance was evident among women in Taiwan where women’s lives are affected by Confucian cultural and family ideology, despite the global trends from the western countries.

This study was conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The former used questionnaires and the latter was carried out with an open-ended interview. In total 267 out of 420 questionnaires were returned and 31 interviews took place. A small number of males were interviewed from both countries to show if the issues are gender-oriented.
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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 How I became interested in this topic

My interest in this study is a result of my own background. My family places great value on education, no matter whether boy or girl: everyone has an equal opportunity to receive an education. In Taiwan, education was something expensive even for boys fifty years ago, and girls in the family were less privileged. Thus, girls entering higher education today are in a situation that did not commonly exist in most Taiwanese or Chinese families until the last two decades. Looking back at my own biography, I was lucky to be brought up in a family where both parents are originally from Mainland China; they came to Taiwan with the KuoMingTang government when it had to evacuate its authority to Taiwan in 1949. Unlike most Taiwanese ethnic families, my parents inherited no land or properties from ancestors, so they lacked a sense of security about their future; as a result, they would ask their children to achieve as high a degree of education as possible. My elder sister and I both received a Master's degree in Britain, which was unusual in most Taiwanese or Chinese families. The reason is that traditionally families regard sons as more important than daughters, and daughters' education is normally sacrificed especially when the financial situation of the family is not good. In my young adulthood, this culture norm does not seem to affect the two daughters in my family.

Regarding my family life, I have never seen my mother carry a full-time job outside the home as long as I can remember. I have always had my mother around when I needed her, even now. My family used to live in a community where the majority are the descendants of Mainlanders between the 1950s and late 1970s. There was a period of hardship when my father was serving in the air force during the day while undertaking his university degree study in the evenings before he got married. He was the only income earner in the family and
the pay for civil servants and officers was extremely low in the 50s and 60s when the KMT government started to relocate their political power in Taiwan.

In the old fashion of the Chinese family, the bride’s parents asked for courtesy money from the groom’s family. The bride’s parents prepare the dowry for their ready-to-marry daughter, and the meaning of courtesy money was regarded as the reward for the bride’s parents. The young couple’s life was happy and satisfactory despite economic hardship. My mother kept working full-time until I was born. There was also the need to look after the aging mother-in-law in the family. Thereafter, my sister and I could always have our breakfast at home and a box of homemade lunch delivered by my mother. Early every morning my mother walked with the bike on which I was sitting in front and my elder sister in the back. Under such circumstances, I believed the type of life my mother had followed was simply to be a dutiful housewife, mother and daughter-in-law. It sounded like a simple hope of a traditional Chinese woman but it was far more difficult to carry out these roles in daily life.

My initial idea of undertaking this doctoral study was fully inspired by my family members. Both my parents were very keen to see me study abroad and advance in my future career. I regard my participation in a doctoral programme not only as an adult woman student but, rather, as involved in a continuing education. Compared with the two former generations in the family, I have gained greater opportunities in education and in employment. My Mainlander ethnic background provides the type of environment to seek a higher degree. Now that I am approaching the end of my doctoral study, I see a different “me” emerging, with all of the gives and takes from my life abroad over the past few years. Undertaking this study has given me great opportunities to re-adjust myself to all kinds of perspectives. The adult women I have encountered reflected my mother’s life and my young adulthood somehow. What I have heard from these women may be different from the views of an English researcher. Hence I am an insider, and at the same time, an outsider as well.

In this study, I am looking not only for similarities but also differences between adult women returnees from different age cohorts within the UK and Taiwan and across the two nations. The main question of this research is: What and how have opportunities and barriers changed
for adult women returning to higher education these two countries? To find an answer I shall start by looking at the historical changes in both societies with special reference to the education and transformation of women’s lives in the UK and Taiwan since the 1950s.

1.2. Globalisation, Knowledge Society and the Women Returnees

This study focuses on a comparison of adult women returnees between the UK and Taiwan. My aims are to examine the barriers and opportunities of adult women from the two nations when they returned to higher education at this life stage. Due to the similarities and differences of women’s lives in the UK and Taiwan, the phenomenon of globalization cannot be divorced from these issues. Jarvis (2001:20) discusses the process of globalization, especially economic globalization, as containing the main driving forces of social change. Jarvis adapted Beck (see Beck, 2000 for an introduction to these processes) and indicated ‘globalisation has become a buzzword in contemporary society and in so doing it has particularly replaced the modern/post-modern debate; late modernity is in any case one of the products of globalisation’. Apparently the process of globalization is tightly connected with the power of economic and with the great help of advanced technology. From the historical angle, Castells (1996:51) demonstrated that the information technology revolution took off during the same period, with one development leading to another. Castells argued that ‘to some extent, the availability of new technologies constituted as a system in the 1970s was a fundamental basis for the process of socio-economic restructuring in the 1980s’ (ibid: 52), in other words, advanced information technology, the progress of socio-economic and intellectual capital where people’s lives, particularly adult women’s lives, are affected and changed in aspects such as educational opportunities, family ideology and gender equality in many developed countries in the past decades. Globalisation has made the boundaries both in time and space easier to be crossed. Events happening in the UK may be known much more quickly by people in Taiwan than ever before. It is worth noting that geographical boundaries
may shrink by the application of the latest information and technology; however, ‘there is
greater respect for cultural diversity than there is through the changes that are introduced
through the global technical-economic sub-culture’ (Jarvis, 2006). Therefore, adults in
Taiwan may follow the ideas of returning to learn that occurred in the UK decades ago;
however, the local cultures in Taiwan, e.g. Confucianism, may adopt western cultural trends
and also recreate another type of sub-culture which is not exactly the same as conventional
Confucianism but a new type of Taiwanese-Chinese culture that mixed with West and East.
Globalisation increases interaction, and this creates opportunities for new learning- but also
for old learning (Stromquist and Monkman, 2000:11). According to Giddens (1994), with
the rise of multiple technologies and globalization dynamics, there are no permanent
structures of knowledge or meaning today. Among adult woman returnees, under the global
trends, their return to education is likely to be interpreted as ‘knowledge seekers’ (Giddens,
1994) affecting a growing proportion of the population in modern societies. University is
regarded as one of the educational institutions providing adults with opportunities to
participate in all kinds of learning activities. Since this study does not focus on the role of
university among the learning activities in society, universities are regarded here as the
organizations where adults intend to gain the knowledge that meets their needs. But under
globalisation it cannot be ignored that the type of knowledge universities provide is likely to
appeal to those participants from the upper- and middle- class families, ‘who might move the
university toward reproducing distinctions of class or reducing its area of knowledge to those
research topics of interests to clients and donors’ (Simpson, 1998). Therefore ethnicity, class
and gender become important indicators in this study when examining the opportunities and
barriers of adult women returning to learn. And their return is likely to be caused by the social,
economic and structural changes at macro level or the family ideology and cultural
backgrounds at micro level. The former, such as social, economic advanced technology and
structural causes occurred similarly in many countries, the latter such as Confucian ideology
and culture or gender inequality. Castells (1997) finds that in several countries women are
often being promoted to multi- skilled jobs that require initiative and education. He believes
that since new technologies demand an autonomous labour force able to adapt and reprogram its own tasks, women with the pertinent skills will benefit in the new informational economy. Yet women comprise the majority of part-time and temporary employment in OECD countries, and longitudinal data reveal that women are increasing their share of this type of participation. Flexible time and part-time work favour women because they accommodate women's needs to combine their child rearing tasks and their working lives (cited from Stromquist and Monkman, 2000:9). Hence the opportunities for adult women participating in education are likely to be opened up compared with decades ago. However, the ideology of gender equality or the family's attitudes towards mother and housewife may be rooted tightly in people's minds and likely to resist the global trends. By conducting this study I have recognized that while there are homogenising tendencies, for instance, 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993) there are also 'fragmenting tendencies' (Bauman, 1995).

In the next section, I shall bring the idea of risk society into discussion: women's participation in education is regarded here as the tendency to seek new knowledge or changes in order to accommodate the type of lives to fit into a modern society.

1.3 Risk Society, Learning Society and Adult Woman Returnees

The border between youth and adulthood has blurred in terms of participation in education at different stages of life. It has been said that in a society of rapid changes the concept of adult education has been assigned a variety of meanings (Jauhiainen & Alho-Malmelin, 2004: 464). The semantic field of studying is becoming splintered to include leisure time activity, entertainment, consumption, work- for some a way of life (e.g. Jarvis 1998: 59-68, Usher 1998:41-67). In this study, adult women returnees participating in education are likely to fit into the idea, mentioned earlier of it being 'a way of life'. For some women, education means leisure time activity that provides them with a better way of living, for others education offers vocational orientation and also reflects their uncertainty from previous education in an
information society. Beck (1992) believes that education in its traditional form has started to waver as we shifted from the ‘stability’ of modern society toward an uncertain and risk-ridden post-modern society, from an industrial society to an information society. Beck (1992: 19) indicates that ‘In advanced modernity the social production of wealth is systematically accompanied by the social production of risks’. In that earlier period, Beck (1992: 21) explained, the word ‘risk’ had a note of bravery and adventure, not the threat of self-destruction of all life on Earth. The concept of risk is directly bound to the concept of reflexive modernization. Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself. Adult women returnees in this study were brought up in different periods of time and social and cultural backgrounds where the ‘hazards and insecurities’ they have encountered resulted from the issues of barriers and opportunities when they returned to learn at this life stage. Jarvis (2000) suggests the learning society is also reflexive modernity. He further indicates ‘the fact we are being forced to learn all the time might actually be the very basis of the learning society, which is the outcome of the forces of globalization that are creating change and thereby generating a culture of learning’ (Jarvis, 2001: 80). The acquisition of everyday knowledge has resulted in ‘the prevalence of scientific and technological knowledge that permeates the cultures of many societies in the world. Only those who have disengaged from society are not really forced to learn a great deal, and even they are still exposed to some of the forces of change’ (ibid). However, Jarvis argues that the acquisition of everyday knowledge may not apply to those living in third world countries but to those living in the first world, particularly in urban situations.

1.4 A Comparative Understanding

As stated above, this study investigates the barriers and opportunities of adult women returning to higher education in the 21st century in the UK and Taiwan. I will examine the barriers and opportunities they encountered in two very different cultures. Women’s lives are
examined in order to see how far they can be affected by societal changes and cultural differences. By doing so adult women in this study, despite growing up in different backgrounds, may have similar and different life experiences. I assume that through the process of comparison, what has occurred in the society of UK may be found similarly or differently in Taiwan years later. As Jarvis (2001) defined:

Globalisation is rather like the ripples that appear on the surface of a pond after a pebble has been thrown in. In this case the process starts from three nodal centres, primarily the USA, then Europe and the Pacific Rim. The effects of globalisation have spread throughout the world, with the periphery being least affected and consequently excluded from many of the considerations, or when it has been affected it is usually by having the centre's solutions, or policies, imposed upon it... In this sense, therefore, the learning society is one that is being forced to change and its members to learn (page 79).

The research draws on a comparison between the UK and Taiwan. It is significant that I can find few articles in the two journals Compare and Comparative Education, which relate to the comparison of adult women returnees in higher education between England and Taiwan in the last decade. In the list of British PhD theses, there are in total 7 doctoral studies in British universities that have their research based on comparative education between England and Taiwan since 1975(Chen, 1975; Yang, 1993; Wu, 1995; Chiang, 2000; Chen, 2003; Huang, 2003; Yu, 2003). Only one of these studies is specifically related to mature women in the UK and Taiwan. With the limited literature about adult women students in the UK and Taiwan, my own privileged Chinese-Taiwanese background and my experience and understanding of British culture after spending years in this country have prompted me to undertake this study.

1.5 Research Questions

As a result of my thinking and beginning my study, my research questions have become more specific and refined. Now they constitute a number of inter-related questions about the initial interests. Though this study looks at adult women I have included a few men's experiences in returning to higher education (HE). In order to demonstrate the difference with women, this is,
however, designed as a comparative study. I am also interested in the transformation of adult women’s lives through education. Thus, my research questions have become:

1. What are the opportunities and barriers and how have they changed for adult women returning to higher education in the UK and Taiwan?
2. How far have the barriers and opportunities for women returning to HE been caused by social and gender factors?
3. Do younger women returnees have more opportunities and lower barriers than their older counterparts when returning to HE?

In order to answer these questions, the thesis will be structured as follows: Chapter Two covers the literature related to adult women students in the UK. Chapters Three and Four contain the social and educational changes since the 1940s in the UK and Taiwan. Chapters Five and Six present the methods used in this study and also the theoretical approaches such as the nature of conducting a comparative study. Chapters Seven to Nine contain findings and comparisons from the data analysis. Chapter Ten deals with the idea of globalisation as a driving force in examining adult women returnees in both nations. The final chapter draws the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

1.6 Summary

This study is initially motivated from my own experiences not only as a young adult student in higher education but also from the concern about adult women students undertaking their studies in higher education. By examining women’s lives in two countries I have realised how far education has influenced women’s private and public position in their societies. Women nowadays are much more concerned about their own identities in the society in which they live and education seems to be the most important access to enhance their position in terms of
self- and career development. However, women's needs and position have been ignored for long time due to the traditional views on their role in the family as a mother and housewife and their disadvantaged position in public activities. Through this study I will firstly examine the changes of women's lives in the UK and Taiwan since 1940s and then move my interest to look at how the barriers and opportunities occurred while women seek access to return to higher education. The research is conducted in two countries, and although the experiences of the adult returnees consulted in this study cannot answer all the questions about adult returnees in two societies, it gives them and adult educators a snapshot of the issues of adults returning to HE in the UK and Taiwan.
Chapter Two
The Social and Educational Changes and Adult Returnees

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises three parts. First I examine the changing social economic context and provide an overview of the changing opportunities for adult returnees to education. Adult women have gained greater opportunities in education, work and gender inequality in the past five decades. The effect of globalisation have enhanced the opportunities significantly when the two societies were compared, and I shall examine how global effects have opened up opportunities for women in education, work and gender inequality. I also intend to give readers views from the changing societies’ contexts including the expansion of higher education in the UK and Taiwan, in order to investigate how societies have changed during the last few decades for adults who want to return to learn.

There are many changes common to higher education in Taiwan and elsewhere, which suggests that Taiwan’s higher education has been affected by the trends of globalisation (Mok, 2000). As there are very limited references in the literature to adult returnees in Taiwan, I shall introduce the theoretical framework of globalisation and discuss how it has affected the society of Taiwan, particularly the economic development and higher education. I will then examine issues about opportunities and barriers for adults participating in higher education (HE) in both countries. The details of historical and educational changes in two countries will be found in Chapters Three and Four.

Secondly, I look at previous studies on adult learning undertaken by large-scale surveys, e.g. the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS, 1997, 2001) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE, 1990, 1991, 1997, 1999, 2002), surveys that indicate issues and phenomena concerning adults returning to learn in Britain during the past decades. Those studies give us a broad view on the participation of adult learning as well as some discussion on the related issues. Also, a six-country comparative investigation (Belanger and Tuijnman,
1997) of the pattern of adult education participation presents a systematic, empirical and comparative analysis of the multiple factors. There is a group of older adults who participated in this study, but none of the relevant surveys have included the data from older adults or from Asia. Results of two reports about senior citizens (SCs): *International Comparison of Learning and Social Participation by the Elderly* (ICLSE: 1997) and *Integrated Studies on Policy Program Development for Lifelong Learning in the Aging Society* (ISPPD, 1996) were added here. The former commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. That survey was conducted in Germany, UK, Sweden, Japan, Korea and the U.S.A during 1995-1997. The latter was basically a Japanese report on educational practices of senior citizens.

Thirdly, I shall highlight the issues from previous studies, mainly from the English side, in order to lead to my own findings in terms of barriers and opportunities for adults returning to learn in higher education (HE). I construct a model that is based on Patricia, K. Cross's (1981) conceptual framework of barriers as being institutional, situational and dispositional. Cross examined demographic, social and technological trends enhancing the opportunities for adult participation in learning. A new model views the issues of barriers and opportunities when adult returning to learn.

### 2.2 Part One: Globalisation: An Overview of the Changing Opportunities

#### 2.2.1 Globalisation and Higher Education

In this section I am going to examine the relation between the effects of globalisation on education. The participation of adults in higher education in this study has it historical and social backgrounds based on the notions about economic prosperity, the promotion of nation’s competitiveness, and uplifted individual capacities both culturally and economically. If our society is to meet the challenge of economic and social regeneration then it will require a renaissance in learning (Ranson, 1998: 25). Education can be regarded as the tool by which
persons and groups gain skills and extend their knowledge, receiving impulses. The purposes of learning may vary from person to person. However, its trends are to meet the world of work and a changing society. Beyond the new global challenges British government and policymakers have noticed the close relation between the nation's economic power and education. At state level, government and universities officials believe that higher education benefits the nation economically, culturally and socially. For the government and industry, in particular, HE is seen as playing an important role in the creation of a globally competitive economy, promoting economic prosperity at local, regional and national levels (NCIHE, 1997).

The results of the expansion of higher education in the UK in the last ten years have contributed greatly to the creation of a learning society, that is a society in which people in all walks of life recognize the need to continue in education and training throughout their working lives and see learning as enhancing the quality of life through all its stages.

The society in Taiwan has also affected by the global trend of a learning society. The expansion of higher education is influenced in its social-economic context where the information and technology require for advanced knowledge in education and research. Castells points out that a knowledge-based economy has a very different demand for labour. By categorising the labour into four main types, Castells highlights the predominance of the producers of high value (knowledge workers) (1997). Demand for this type of labour, together with the call for lifelong learning in the knowledge-based economy, have undoubtedly imposed pressures on the higher education sector to reform its curricula, mission and vision, as well as to reflect deeply about the role of higher education in the new century (Green 1999, Jarvis 2000)

From the view of enhanced personal capacity, adult women who participate in university education may also be given the strength to uplift their personal capacities and personal economic potential, particularly for those adults are from disadvantaged groups such as women, ethnic minorities, working class, unemployed or retired people. In the UK,
government and universities state that those who participate in higher education can considerably increase their earning potential (DfEE, 1998).

In Taiwan, the enhancement of personal capacity in higher education degree acquisition is related to the equality of both sexes. The recent policy upon education of women stated that 'education is not only a fundamental right; from the human resource (capital) perspective, investment in education is the key to equality between sexes and the transformation of gender and sexual discrimination in terms of social values. Providing women with the equal right to join the education system is important so women may change society and break away from their disadvantaged positions. The education of women should be aimed at lifelong (Department of Interior, 2000) and in the recent years women have gained an equal opportunity in higher education.

Adult women returnees in both countries benefited from the global impacts in higher education expansion and gained multi-access from returning to learn. I mentioned earlier that state and individuals regard education as the tools to gain skills and extend their knowledge. If knowledge is essential to globalisation, globalisation should have a deep impact on the transmission of knowledge.

Next I move on to borrow the theoretical framework from Martin Carnoy’s (2000) interpretation of globalisation and education. He regarded globalisation as having a major impact on education in financial terms, in labour market terms and in educational terms that actually may reflect back the views of global economic and personal capacity. Carnoy (2000:44) said:

*In financial terms, most government are under pressure to reduce the growth of public spending on education and to find other sources of funding for the expected expansion of their educational systems.

*In labour market terms, the payoff to higher levels of education is rising worldwide as a result of the shifts of economic production to knowledge-intensive products and processes. Governments are also under increased pressure to attract foreign capital,
and this means a steady supply of highly skilled labour. This, in turn, places increased pressure on governments to expand their higher education and, correspondingly, to increase the number of secondary school graduates ready to attend postsecondary institutions. In countries that were previously resistant to providing equal access to education for young women, the need for more highly educated low-cost labour tends to expand women’s educational opportunities.

*In educational terms, the quality of national educational systems is increasingly being compared internationally. This has placed increased emphasis on math and science curricula, standards, testing, and on meeting standards by changing the way education is delivered.

According to Carnoy’s interpretation, the new challenges for higher education resulted from global economic competition, and this has provided more educational opportunities to non-traditional students such as women who normally earned lower wages. I wonder whether adults from these disadvantaged groups do benefit from the global impacts on educational opportunities? Or do global impacts under the idea of capacity only serve a limited number of adults? The findings of my study can provide answers to these questions since many adult woman returnees in this study are middle-aged, white, and from wealthy middle class social backgrounds on the English side. Some are young adults, some are older participants, lone mothers with financial crises or from working class and ethnic minority backgrounds. Although global impacts may enhance educational opportunities compared with decades ago, yet for general adult participants, significant numbers are excluded from the educational opportunities. Recent UK statistics paint an even more pessimistic picture despite an increasing emphasis on encouraging participation among working-class groups (NCIHE, 1997; Connor et al., 1999).

In sum, there have been social and historical changes for adults who have participated in higher education in the past few decades in the UK. For women participants there are historical, social and cultural significances. However, it is not significant for those who are
from the margin of society such as older people, lone mothers with financial crises, ethnic minority and working class backgrounds despite the global impacts.

The state and institutions are also facing the problems in terms of capacity when discuss the global trends and education.

In Taiwan, higher education is influenced by the global trends; the socio-economic context also boosts the expansion of higher education in order to meet the needs of the producers in an information technology era. Later in the chapter I shall examine global trends in women’s work and the global influences on gender inequality in which women’s lives have been changed significantly.

Next I shall further examine how the idea of learning society has affected on English higher education.

2.2.2 The Learning Society and Higher Education

The pace of change in the workplace will require people to re-equip themselves, as new knowledge and new skills are needed for economies to compete and to survive. A lifelong career in one organisation will become the exception. People will need the knowledge and skills to control and manage their own working lives. This requires a learning society, which embraces both education and training, for people at all levels of achievement, before, during and for continuing personal fulfilment after working life.

Over the past 20 years the UK has created a society committed to learning throughout life. The main purposes of education, defined by Robbins in 1963, were elaborated in Dearing’s report (1997) in which education throughout life was included:

* For individuals to develop capabilities to the higher potential throughout life, so they grow intellectually, are equipped for work, contribute to society, and achieve personal fulfilment.
* To increase knowledge and understanding, for its own sake and to apply beneficially to the economy and society.
* To serve the knowledge-based economy, locally and nationally.
Education is life enriching and desirable in its own right. It is fundamental to the achievement of an improved quality of life in the UK. Therefore, it should be a national policy objective to be of world class both in learning at all levels and different kinds of research. In higher education, this aspiration should be realised through a new compact involving institutions and their staff, students, employers and society in general. People see the historic boundaries between vocational and academic education breaking down, with increasingly active partnerships between higher education institutions and the world of industry, commerce and public service. In such a compact, each party should recognize its obligation to the others. Over the next 20 years we will see higher education gaining in strength through the pursuit of quality and a commitment to high standards. That means higher education will make the contribution to the development of a learning society through teaching, scholarship and research. National need and demand for higher education will drive a resumed expansion of student numbers young and mature, full-time and part-time. Over the next two decades, however, higher education will face challenges as well as opportunities.

2.2.3 Higher Education Expansion in the UK

Adult returnees gained a greater opportunity due to the expansion of higher education where number of non-traditional students increased dramatically in the UK in the past decades. In 1976 there were just over 50,000 acceptances of HE places compared to nearly 130,000 accepted for 1992 (UCCA 1992:5). In the 1960s, participation rates in British higher education were below 10%. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the UK participation rate has reached 35% and is now greater than the US rate (OECD, 2000; Woodward, 2000). The DES (Department of Education and Science) in its publication *Higher Education: meeting the challenge* cited that adult students were regarded as having a pivotal role in the Conservative administration’s 1987 planes for higher education expansion and reform. The
groups of students to be targeted were women, ethnic minorities, disabled and working-class people, with access courses being officially designed as 'the third route' into higher education (DES, 1987). Adult students may gain easier access to the new universities that favour providing a mature-students-friendly-environment compared with other English universities which aim to serve traditional students. Older applicants and those with non-traditional entry qualifications make up an increasing share of many universities' intakes, especially in the new university sector (Connor et al., 1999). However, recent figures from the Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS) show a consistent decline in the number of mature students entering higher education (UCAS, 2000). The latest statistics indicate the dramatic impact of the introduction of fees on the number of mature students entering UK universities (Major, 2000). This seems likely to have affected non-traditional students. In 1998-99, mature entrants numbered 90,585- a fall of 10% (Reay et al., 2002).

I shall now look back to the historical expansion of English universities in the 60s and 80s with a brief introduction. This following brief summary of the changes of HE was adopted from Davies et al. (1997:4).

The modern expansion of the university sector has taken place since 1945 (Taylor et al., 1985: 58). Nine new 'green field' universities were built and ten Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) became universities, following the Robbins Report (Committee for Education, 1963); and in 1969 the Open University (OU) was established (see Duke, 1992, for a more detailed description of these developments). The polytechnics were established between 1969 and 1973, awarding degrees of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and managed by the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Thus from the early 1970s higher education in the UK was a binary system based on universities and polytechnics, although there continued to be a significant number of colleges and institutes of higher education which did not fit neatly into this system, especially the smaller specialist colleges, of music, agriculture, theology and so on. In addition, the Open University was quite distinct in terms of its structure, academic year, provision (almost entirely distance learning) and student body, and was separately funded. In the Education Reform Act of 1988 polytechnics
were moved from the control of LEAs and incorporated as independent institutions. In 1992
the Further and Higher Education Act finally abolished the binary system and enabled the
polytechnics to be renamed universities. The colleges of higher education mostly became
affiliated or associated in some way to a university, offering degrees validated by that
institution, although many continue to be funded as separate institutions. In the late 1980s and
early 1990s, the post-compulsory sector (further and higher education) saw the most dramatic
and fundamental change. In 1996, there were 177 institutions of higher education financed by
the funding councils of England, Wales and Scotland and by the Education Department of the
Northern Ireland Office, of which 93 had the title university (including the colleges of the
federal institutions of London and Wales as separate institutions). Those institutions
previously called ‘new’ - the green field and ex-CAT universities - are now called ‘old’; the
term ‘new’ now refers to the former polytechnics. These new universities recruit older adults
and those with non-traditional qualifications as scholars (cited from Connor et al., 1999). The
higher education participation index rose in a dramatic fashion (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1 Higher education participation index**

*Chart 3.1 - Full-time UK students in higher education in the UK (000s)*

![Chart 3.1 - Full-time UK students in higher education in the UK (000s)](chart31)

Source: Dearing 1997: Chart 3.5

Note: Initial entrants to full-time higher education courses for the first time.
2.2.4 Higher Education Expansion in Taiwan

Similarly, higher education in Taiwan is affected by the global trends, as mentioned earlier. However, the socio-economic context has become an important trigger to the expansion of higher education in Taiwan. The details of the social changes in Taiwan in the past decades will be shown in Chapter Four. Here I shall demonstrate important phenomena in the 1980s and 90s that have closely related to the higher education expansion in Taiwan. In order to prepare all Taiwan citizens for the knowledge economy in the new century and to strengthen the competitiveness of Taiwan in the global market, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has diversified higher education opportunities by allowing different actors/sectors and even the market to engage in creating more opportunities for higher education (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 1999). One of the significant results is that more and more private higher educational institutions have been formed in Taiwan in the 1990s. By 1988, the number of universities and independent colleges had jumped to 84 of which more than half were universities (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 1998). (see Table 2.1)

Table 2.1 Profile of higher education in Taiwan in 1980-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>128</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>128</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1992</td>
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<td>1984</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>146</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>127</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


With the growth of higher education in Taiwan, about 61.6% of students who took the Joint University Entrance Examination were admitted by either universities or colleges in 1997, showing a growth of 11.2% of successful applicants to university education (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 1998). Similar to the experiences of the higher education systems moving
from massification to post-massification in other Western countries as well as in East Asia, the rapid expansion of higher education may lead to the problems of lowering academic standards (Mok 2000). The Taiwan government became aware of the social influences resulting from the dramatic increase of university students and with the expansion of private colleges and universities in terms of quality assurance. Therefore, the Taiwan government has started to develop systems for quality assurance in higher education (Yung, 1999, Field Interview, Taipei, December 1999) and keeping Taiwan as competitive as possible in regional and global markets (Mok, 2000).

On the other hand, since the abolishment of martial law in 1987, the Taiwan government has begun to develop a more institutionalised government and a more democratic political structure such as the open election of legislators to the Legislature and the election of President by the people. However, the process of democratisation in the past decade has led to the most controversial notion of song-bang (in a more specific sense, the idea of song-bang is similar to deregulation, by which the education sector in Taiwan would be relaxed from strict state control (Chu and Yeh, 1995)). Under the notion of song-bang, the government philosophy is also moving toward the policy of ‘privatization’ in education (United Daily News, 28 December 1999). In addition, the Executive Yuan was engaging in intensive research for two years, and a Blueprint for Educational Reform was published in 1994 (Weng, 1999). The Ministry of Education published a White Paper on Education in 1995, including the two major principles related to adult participation in education which I have cited: first is the ‘Alternative Routes for Continuing Education’: establishing specialty and comprehensive high schools, with diversified admission systems; second, establishing a ‘Lifelong Learning Society’: promoting the concepts and system of lifelong learning with the help of school reform, recurrent education, and administrative measures’ (CER, 1995, Ministry of Education, Taiwan 1997). The term of ‘learning society’ was launched by the late Professor Lin, Ching-Chiang, the former Minister of Education. He conceived that the future of society should be a ‘learning society’ in the coming century. Lin was particularly keen to develop Taiwan to
become a 'lifelong learning society' where Taiwan people can be educated to be creative and adaptive to changes and challenges ahead (Lin, 1998).

To sum up, the democratisation in Taiwan in the 1980s has vitalised the expansion of higher education, which led to the rapid increase of private colleges and universities. Later, the Taiwan government started to be concerned about the quality of higher education and conscious of the impact of globalisation on people living on the island-state in terms of knowledge acquisition. Thus the idea of 'lifelong learning society' was launched to promote the learning access and quality people will have received in the society of Taiwan. The global impacts seemed to act as an important trigger in higher education expansion in Taiwan; however, Mok argues what really causes the current changes in Taiwan's higher education is far more significantly affected by local forces or factors instead of the global ones (Mok, 2000). Mok further indicated '...not all nations have responded to globalization in the same way because of the specificities of national history, politics, culture and economy' (ibid).

Therefore, we should not analyse 'globalisation practices' in higher education in terms of a one-dimensional movement from 'the state' to 'the market'. Rather, we must contextually analyse the interaction between a range of critical shaping factors in the local context and the impetus for change driven by global trends (Mok, 1999, 2000). In the context of Taiwan society, the opportunities for adult women returning to learn were rapidly increased by the higher education expansion.

Next I shall move to examine other aspects of adult women's lives that have changed, such as work and gender inequality.

2.2.5 Globalisation and Work

In the previous sections, I have discussed the impacts of globalisation and learning society upon higher education in terms of opportunities for adult women participants. Now I extend my subject from education to work to examine what changes have been made on women's job
opportunities under the global impacts. Between 1960 and 1990s, there was a fundamental shift in the nature of employment in societies where knowledge was a major element in the economy. Stehr (1992: 75) shows that in the UK the percentage of the labour force in the manufacturing industry fell from 47.7% in 1960 to 27.3% in 1991, but in the same years the percentage of those in the service sector rose from 47.6% to 70%. These figures show that the nature of the workforce has undergone change and that especially commonly referred to as knowledge societies, a big proportion of it is now regarded as knowledge orientated (Jarvis, 2001, p.39). People in the information society will ensure that their participation in education and training is responsive and will cultivate the broadest variety of social, cultural as well as economic skills. As we are in the 21st century, we will depend more and more on the knowledge, understanding and skills of the whole population in order to meet the immense challenges of the global economy and technological changes. Thus we must bear in mind the idea that learning for work and learning for life are inseparable.

All types of learning should be valued. There is no clear borderline between vocational and non-vocational learning nowadays. For instance, many people may discover a new career direction through their leisure interests (cf. Cooley, 1993). Formal learning for seeking qualifications can become part of leisure life to achieve personal satisfaction. Therefore, the difference between training by employers and education by educational institutions has also become less distinct due to the growth of work-based learning and employee development schemes.

In addition, globalization appears to have raised the rate of women returning to education. In many countries rates of return to education for women are higher than for men (Ryoo et al., 1993). The reasons for such increased participation rate of women are complex. It links closely to the worldwide movement for women’s rights which has had the effect of legitimising equal education for women, women’s control over their fertility rates, women’s increased participation in wage labour markets, and women’s rights to vote (Castells, 1997; Ramirez et al., 1997). In addition the demands that women have the same rights as men have brought a large number of married women into the labour market. Meanwhile it has
stimulated women to obtain as much as, and more, education than men. Therefore globalization is accentuating this phenomenon by women to participate in education. While the opportunities in jobs have been increased for women, they are still underrepresented in some professional fields and their wages are not the same as men’s. But globalisation seems gradually to be changing that, for both positive and negative reasons (Carnoy, 2000:54):

The positive reasons are that flexible organisation in business enterprise requires flexible labour, and women are as or more flexible than men, and that the information technology and telecommunications are spreading democratic ideas worldwide. The negative reason is that women are paid much less than men almost everywhere in the world, and it is profitable for firms to hire women and pay them lower wages.

2.2.6 Globalisation and Gender Inequality

The impact on gender inequality is felt worldwide. Adult women returning to higher education are at a stage in their lives linked to transition (i.e., children grown up; looking for advanced employment or retirement) and cultural forces. An important dimension of culture regards the integration of masculinity and femininity (Stromquist and Monkman, 2000:8). Stromquist and Monkman suggest that the most positive feature of globalisation for women has been their incorporation into the labour market (p.9). According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) data, this incorporation in the seven major national economies grew by about 30 percent between 1970 and 1990, a growth that Castells calls a ‘massive incorporation of women in paid work’ throughout the world (1996:253). Women’s increased participation in paid work provides the feeling of being free from their family or other commitments, a space and time where women can be in control of their lives and some may enjoy social relationships with other women. Paid employment is also found to raise self-confidence, self-esteem and respect from other people in their household, so overall women are to some degree empowered by independent incomes (Denman, 2002). Manuel Castells (1997) goes further by suggesting that the feminisation of employment, together with new reproductive technologies, the feminist movement and the global culture in which ideas quickly spread, pose a challenge to patriarchalism. According to Castells (1997:134-35):
Patriarchalism is a founding structure of all contemporary societies. It is characterised by the institutionally enforced authority of males over females and their children in the family unit. The patriarchal family, the cornerstone of patriarchalism, is being challenged in this end of the millennium by the inseparably related processes of the transformation of women's work and the transformation of women's consciousness.

Castells (1997) suggested that the feminisation of employment places an 'unbearable burden on women's lives as the paid work is generally added on to their other roles, it increases women's bargaining power relative to men and undermines men's role as sole or main provider' (p.136). Stromquist and Monkman (1999) indicate that the results from OECD countries show women comprise the majority of part-time and temporary employment in OECD countries, and longitudinal data reveal that women are increasing their share of this type of participation. Part-time jobs represent about one-fifth of the jobs in OECD economies, and under globalisation these jobs have a tendency to increase. Flexible time and part-time work favour women because they accommodate women's needs to combine their child rearing tasks and their working lives (p.9). From this Stromquist and Monkman conclude that this 'accommodation' tends to reproduce highly gendered social relations, Patriarchal structures are not changing very much. They cited the findings from Rerrich's (1996) study on the division of labour within families in Western Germany found that though the patriarchal structures are modernising in the sense that women are encouraged to enter the labour force and the public arena, reproduction (i.e. domestic and menial) work is being redistributed between different groups of women. In the German context, young, better qualified, and wealthier German women and men are increasingly likely to delegate reproductive work to other less qualified, socially disadvantaged, and/or foreign women.

Nowadays women need comparatively higher levels of education to compete with men for the better jobs in societies where information and technology have leading roles such as UK and Taiwan. Secondary education cannot fulfil the type of knowledge women needs to survive under gender discrimination.
In addition, gender inequality is related to globalization impacts on culture. As mentioned earlier the worldwide movement for women's rights has had the effect of legitimizing equal education for women and other events in women's lives. While the world is becoming smaller and more homogeneous at some levels, in a variety of ways local cultures are making efforts to retain their identity and, in some cases, even to rediscover it (Stromquist and Monkman, 2000:7). Some see the impacts of globalization on culture through the advanced technology toward homogeneity of values and norms, but others see the opportunity to rescue local identities. For Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997), the cultural forces reflected in the global media influence roles, identities, and experiences. In their view, old identities and traditional ways of seeing and being in the world have been challenged, and new forms are being constructed out of the 'multifarious and sometimes conflicting configurations of traditional, local, national, and now global forces of the present time' (p.10). They argue that 'although global forces can be oppressive and erode cultural traditions and identities they can also provide new material to rework one's identity and can empower people to revolt against traditional forms and styles to create new, more emancipatory ones’ (p.10).

Adult women returnees in this study not only seek new knowledge but also self-identity while returning to learn. The changes on gender inequality in terms of the formation of masculinity and femininity provide women with more opportunities in education and in paid employment. The image of women doing the 'light' jobs while men did the 'heavy' ones has been challenged in the labour division in the information technology era. The changing forms of employment do not mean the changes of gender relations through which gender inequality can be reborn. The global culture impacts on patriarchalism helped spread the gender's ideology worldwide to rework women’s consciousness. Although the global impacts have successfully made changes and more and more women feel empowered as a consequence of equal opportunities in education and independent incomes, gender equality tends to be limited, mainly because the ideology of patriarchy has rooted deeply in the social structures and in some men's and women's minds.
2.2.7 Alternative Routes to HE

As Parry (1995:107) has pointed out, mature students were frequently constructed as 'returnees'—those who missed out on earlier educational opportunities, highlighting 'acknowledged deficiencies and inequities in the system of compulsory and post-compulsory education.' Traditionally, English universities have been highly competitive with a stated performance at GCE 'A' level that only the top students could enter the narrow gate. Increasingly universities, especially the new ones, are recognising alternative qualifications to recruit non-traditional students. The English student profile has changed radically due to the large increases in access courses, foundation courses and part-time degrees. A key feature of the system is an ageing student population. The Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) figures show that in 1994-1995 over 40% of the student population was over the age of 25 and 25% was aged between 21 and 24 (THES, 1996).

The alternative vocational qualification routes include such as the former BTEC National Awards, later GNVQs, with subject areas and pass levels, and the Access route in which non-traditional students successfully complete an accredited access programme in a local college. Generally this type of programme links with local higher education institutions and emphasises study skills that non-traditional students lack when entering universities. The 1987 White Paper (DES, 1987) endorsed vocational qualifications as the second, and Access courses as the third official route into higher education. This was accompanied by a tightening of the funding arrangements through the introduction of contract-based funding and performance indicators (Davies et al, 1997: 7). In 1995 there were over 1,200 recognised Access courses accounting for over 30,000 students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with separate arrangements existing for Scotland (Wilson and Hill, 1997). Hence Access courses are seen as central to broadening participation, as they provide opportunities for those groups traditionally under-represented in higher education.
Many of the adult returnees in this study came to study in universities via Access programmes, particularly those from minority and disadvantaged groups. Scholars once argued about the issues of equality of opportunities while Access programmes are frequently regarded as favouring disadvantaged groups such as women, ethnic minority and working class. Inevitably there are tensions depending on the interpretation of the concept of equality of opportunities (Stowell, 1992); and there might be a need to target unskilled and semi-skilled men (Benn and Burton, 1994). While Access is considered an easier route than the conventional one, much research into Access has been carried out in the past decades. I am particularly interested in the ‘Mature Students’ Routes into Higher Education’ research conducted by Carolyn Britton and Arthur Baxter in 1994. They found that ‘there are significant differences between the typical female returnee pattern and the male one’ (Britton and Baxter, 1994:222). In their study, male returnees are under 27 years on entry and the majority had been in more or less continuous paid employment prior to entry. Compared with their male counterparts, the majority respondents were women in their late twenties and thirties, most of whom, because of family responsibilities had a significant break from education and from the labour market. Clearly the returnee’s route is different for men and women, who come into higher education at different stages of their lives, and bring with them different sets of life expectation (Britton and Baxter, 1994:224). Access routes are most significant for women returnees, especially those who have been out of education and the labour market for some time. They tend to have left school at the minimum school leaving age with few or no qualifications (ibid.). There is a difference between adult men and women in terms of age, employment status, type of courses and entering qualification, with women, entering university via Access courses had spent some time at home with children, usually on a full-time basis. Many of them left their paid job on the birth of their first child. By contrast, male Access students typically left school at the minimum leaving age with few or no qualifications, and entered full-time employment for a minimum period of four or five years, before taking Access courses. These students are typically older than the other male returnees (cited from Britton and Baxter, 1944: 224). In their study, they also found the Access group
heavily weighted towards working class backgrounds, with 57% of the students having working class fathers; this applied equally to men and women. Issues about Access courses are widely examined among scholars, but because this is not the main purpose of this study I have only cited the research related to my core issues about women returnees.

In addition, the recent establishment of the Widening Participation (WP) is targeting the under-representative groups including mature students, disabled students and the ethnic groups in terms of equality of opportunities entering Higher Education. The research and government policies about the non-participation in Higher Education have become important issues in the past decades, mainly because 'students tended to come from middle-class backgrounds, usually as recurrent learners' (Stuart, 2002:13). On the other hand, the distinction between Higher Education and Further Education was becoming less marked (Gallacher and Thomson, 1999:16) and the number of students has increased greatly in the past decades. However, 'neither FE nor HE had succeeded in attracting the broad-based student population expected. More recent widening participation strategies are, therefore, rooted in a sense that change was necessary to attract new students from the poorest communities in Britain' (Fryer, 1997). More students were priorities such as working class, disaffected young people, women, and people from ethnic communities. The recent development of widening participation also indicated the 'needs of global capitalism where “upskilling” is the main focus of learning “taken up over the lifespan”'(Wicks, 2000). The government as well as the groups of students, particularly from secondary and higher education, face the changing world of work and employment structure when they start to have a need of competitiveness in the job market.

As previous research about adult returnees contributing to this study combined quantitative and qualitative data, I shall review both types of studies.
2.3 Part Two: Previous Quantitative and Qualitative Studies on Adult Returnees

2.3.1 Quantitative Studies

There have been many studies focusing on adult returnees to learning. Early surveys undertaken by the British Institute of Adult Education reach back to 1936. They used a postal survey of over 500 adults from varied occupations and areas. In 1953, Ernest Green reported on a survey entitled *Adult Education: why this apathy?* Almost 2,000 adult students responded. In 1955-57 there was a related survey to examine attitudes of the general public in the London area to educational communications and access to resources of information (Trenaman, 1957). The National Institute of Adult Education’s report *Adequacy of Provision* recorded the results of 3,549 interviews with non-participants and participants in non-vocational adult education courses in seven Local Education Authority areas in England and Wales. From this report it summarised that ‘the two main reasons for going to classes were “work” and “know more about the subject/learn the correct way”’ (Hutchinson and Hutchingson, 1970:59). These earlier studies place emphasis on large-scale quantitative research which documented participation rates and the educational background and achievements of mature students (Smithers & Griffin, 1986; Woodley et al., 1987). They tend to regard adult students as homogenous groups and look at their difference from conventional university students.

American researchers in the early days draw on different categories in terms of participation in learning. For instance, Houle (1979:31-2) concluded that participation in any type of educational activity is usually undertaken for a variety of motives rather than a single one, and that these usually reinforce each other. He formulated an early (1961) and still useful typology within which to classify these motives: goal-orientated learners, activity-orientated learners and those whose main orientation is learning for its own sake. In a later study, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) interviewed 744 adult learners by telephone of whom 83% of specified a life transition as the motivating factor that caused them to start learning e.g. a
change in employment. Such surveys do point to the significance of analysing the life world of learners in order to understand both their motivation and approach to learning.

Since the 1990s there have been some large-scale studies led by NIACE and by the relevant ministries of education. The first of the current sequence of surveys was entitled *Learning and Leisure* (Sargant, 1991): its aim was to see if it was possible to identify the effect of encouraging adult learning in London in terms of ‘learning society’. The second national survey, *What price the learning society?* (Braunholtz and Tuckett, 1994) focused on adult education and access to the quality of local provision. The third study, *The Learning Divide* (Sargant et al., 1997) provided the most comprehensive coverage of the UK. In 1996, the DfEE commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (formerly SCPR, Social and Community Planning Research) to further develop people’s experiences of and attitudes towards learning. Both taught and non-taught learning were included in this survey. The fourth and fifth large-scale studies came out in 1999 and 2002. They looked at various activities in relation to learning, as well as the motivation for returning to learn and future intention for participation in learning. The 2002 survey is more obviously a comparable study looking at adult participation in education and training and other themes e.g. the sources of information about learning; its locations and duration; the role of qualifications; motivations for, and outcomes of learning; and barriers to learning. The study provided data to illustrate how patterns of participation have changed over time and foresee the future changes that can be measured now.

The Six-Country Comparative Study (Belanger and Tuijnman, 1997), collected in 1994 as part of the International Adult Literacy Survey, involves records received from over 20,000 individual responses. The samples represent adult populations aged 16-65 in Canada, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, and the United States. This study tried to build a model explaining participation in adult education and training and implied two dependent variables: participation in job-related courses and participation in leisure-related courses. Gender, age, level of educational attainment, and labour market status were specified in the model as the explanatory variables. The research also referred to the *cultural attributes* that influence adult
education participation. Such participation can be studied from the aspect of cultural and symbolic attributes, which define a relationship between culture and adult education.

The international survey report 'International Comparison of Learning and Social Participation by the Elderly' (ICLSE) was commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and conducted between 1995-97 in Germany, Japan, Korea, Sweden, the UK and the United States (age group 60-79, N=approximately 1000 in each country). The survey included issues about public policies and facilities for education and training for the elderly. The respondents were also asked to provide information such as income, expenditure, employment, free time, leisure activities, and general life satisfaction. Further, the survey referred to individual and social attitudes towards ageing, gender issues, time availability, and the content and purpose of learning and training. The reports provide a wide understanding between Asian countries (e.g., Japan and Korea) and OECD countries.

Lastly, the report 'Integrated Study on Policy and Program Development for Lifelong Learning in the Aging Society' (ISPPD) was conducted during 1994-96 by the group of National Institute for Educational Research of Japan (NIER-Chief researcher Yoshihiro Yamamoto). The report discussed issues about education and training for the aged and conducted interviews with the elderly, individuals and bodies responsible for education and training of the elderly.

2.2.2 Qualitative Studies

Hopper and Osborn (1975) also found that adult women students commented that by the time they left school they had simply had enough of education. Their study notes that a period of drift had come to an end and, unlike the departure from primary school, leaving warranted no tears (p.134). Their interviewees typically described themselves as individuals who were not expected to become scholars, so they characterised this group as those for whom access was denied. Pascal and Cox (1993b) drew on a longitudinal study of 43 women returnees at two
higher educational institutions in the East Midlands in the early 1980s. The returnees were asked to reflect on their early educational experiences, careers in paid and unpaid work, decisions about returning to education and experience of education so far. More recently, some research in this area has shifted away from a preoccupation with quantitative indices to studies that focus on the quality of the student experience. Such studies are necessarily qualitative in approach, and tend to be based on interview data from a fairly small sample of selected adult students (Edwards, 1993; Pascall & Cox, 1993a; McGivney, 1992, 1994b; Blaxter & Tight, 1994; Maynard & Pearsall, 1994; Wakeford, 1994; James, 1995; West, 1995). A number of these explored the perspectives of those taking part in particular institution- or community-based initiatives aimed at adult returnees, and were carried out by researchers based in higher education institutions (Macdonald and Stratta, 1998; Merrill, 1999; Tett, 1999; Preece, 2000). Macdonald & Stratta and Preece found out that an increase in access needs has changed the culture of higher education institutions and that such a change benefits adult returnees. While Access courses became the alternative route for adults returning to higher education, a number of researches discussed the related issues (Edwards, 1990; Yeo, 1991; Wakeford, 1993; Britton and Baxter, 1994; Davies, 1994). Also, a significant number of studies investigated the issues of adult returnees from working class backgrounds (Egerton and Halsey 1993; Brown and Scase 1994; Kirton 1999; Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Reay, 2000; Reay, 2001; Ball et. al., 2002; Reay et. al., 2002; Hart, 2005). Other recent research explored the range of opportunities and constraints mature student encounter in terms of transition to higher education (Furlong, and Cartmel, 1997; MacDonald and Stratta, 1998; Haynes, 1999; Merrill, 1999; Ball et. al., 2000; Marion, 2001; Libert, 2004).
2.4 Part Three: Barriers and Opportunities

2.4.1 Introduction

This section looks at the discussion on the motivation and participation of adults in learning. When asked what motivated them to return to education, their responses fell into three categories: personal factors, work-related factors and leisure factors. As to participation, the American scholar Patricia K. Cross presented a Chain-of-response (COR) model to indicate the factors which influenced adults in education in the 1960s and '70s beyond the American society. She reviewed a number of earlier studies in the construction of the model, to which we will return later. Society has changed dramatically during the past few decades, and the participation of adults in education is in a different social and economic context. That means the barriers and opportunities that adult students encountered are being changed. Thus it is necessary to draw out a new model to present the current issues in barriers and opportunities when I discuss adult returning to learning in HE.

2.4.2 Motivation for Returning to Learn

The reasons why adults participate in learning are more complex than children spending time on learning since it is a matter of personal choice which has to be fitted into often complicated lives, competing with other demands on time such as work, family commitments and other interests. In order to understand what motivates adults to spend their time learning instead of on other activities, such investigation is therefore essential in seeking to encourage more adult participation in learning activities. I am going to look at the motivations listed in the ‘Issues arising from the NIACE survey on adult participation in learning 2002’ (NIACE, 2003: Table 10) where a number of options are given for participants’ reasons for starting their main subject of learning. As shown in Table 2.2 below the most frequently cited reasons were ‘I am interested in the subject/ personal interest’ (34%) and ‘I enjoy learning/ it gives me pleasure’
(31%), and because ‘it would help in my current job’ (29%). Others were ‘to develop myself as a person’ (25%); ‘to get a job’ (17%); ‘to get a recognised qualification’ (24%). The classification of learning ‘in order to improve my self-confidence’, often a commonly reported benefit of learning within qualitative studies, was added to the list of options for the first time in the 2002 NIACE survey, and was referred to by 12% of respondents.

Table 2.2 Details of main reasons for starting current/recent learning, UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>UK %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in the subject</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning/It gives me pleasure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help my current job</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop myself as a person</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a job</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a recognised qualification</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make my work more satisfying</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a rise in earnings</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my self-confidence</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a job with a different employer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To change the type of work I do</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help me get onto a future course of learning</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet people</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a promotion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really my choice-employer requirement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really my choice-professional requirement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adult Learning and Social Division, Volume 2, NIACE 2002, Table 10, p65

Table 2.3 shows how the individual reasons for starting learning can be combined into four main groups. Overall 58% of respondents cited work-related reasons, 52% cited personal development reasons, 49% education/progression reasons, while 6% said that participation in their main learning activity was not really their choice. The reason for including these surveys into this study is their continuity and the huge number of replies during the past decade. They show us a complete picture of the motivation of adults returning to learn.
Table 2.3 Summary of main reasons for starting current/recent learning, UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>UK %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base: all current/ recent learners=100%</td>
<td>2073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work related</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/progression</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not my choice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adult Learning and Social Division, Volume 2, NIACE 2002, Table 9, p64

The NIACE 2002 findings showed ‘not interested’ and ‘work/time pressures’ were the two main reasons given by respondents when asked what factors were likely to prevent them from engaging in learning in the future (see Table 2.4). The reason ‘time pressures’ was interpreted as participants with greater interests and hobbies being more likely to participate in learning despite the demands on their time. In addition, the reasons ‘I feel I am too old’ indicated the anxiety and concerns on the growing learning division. The NIACE 2002 survey found a higher proportion of women (42%) than men (33%) said that they were likely to take up learning in the next three years. Of those who said that they were unlikely to do so, men were more likely than women to say that they were not interested or that work/time pressures prevented them (NIACE, 2003:72).

Table 2.4 Main factors likely to prevent respondents engaging in learning in the future, UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>UK %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base: All respondents not likely to take up learning in the next 3 years=100%</td>
<td>3,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested/ don’t want to</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/ other time pressures</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am too old</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel no need to learn anymore</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare/caring responsibilities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t got round to do it</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am ill/ too disabled</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adult Learning and Social Division, Volume 2, NIACE 2002, Table 19, p71.
In 2002, apart from the instrumental benefits, 81% of adults believed that learning is enjoyable for its own sake. Three quarters of respondents agree that people who receive training find their jobs more interesting and say that they are confident about learning new things. However, as in 1999, while 92% of current learners expressed confidence in learning new skills, the proportion drops to just over half (55%) among those who have not done any learning since leaving full-time education.

Research evidence suggests that certain life circumstances can act as a trigger in encouraging adults to participate in learning. The NIACE 2002 surveys found the incidence of personal circumstances since 1999 to be relatively stable. There has also been an encouraging interest in family learning, expressed as ‘wanting to help my children learn’ from 7% in 1996, to 10% in 1999 and 11% in 2002. Since 1999, there has been an apparent increase in the incidence of illness and disability from 10% to 13%, perhaps relating to the change of wording.

In the next section, although the reasons for returning to learn vary, according to many researches on motivation, I adopted the ideas from the study conducted by Aslanian and Brickell (1980) in which they hypothesised that transitions—such as job changes, marriage, the arrival of new children, and retirement—require adults to seek new learning. I divided the motivation into three categories as personal, work-related and leisure factors to discuss what has made adults return to learning. Motivation may integrate the factors from different categories. Other factors such as gender, age and social backgrounds would possibly affect adults’ participation on learning.

2.4.3 Personal factors

In the NIACE 2002 survey, personal development is listed by 52% of the respondents as the second largest reason for intending to return to learn (see Table 2.3). Thus reasons for
returning to education may be guided not only by educational or career goals: their educational participation may appear to be extrinsically motivated, and may be externally linked with career change or enhancement, but these choices may also fulfil more personal needs and growth processes. Marshall and Nicolson (1991) have summarised the varying reasons as a desire to enhance self-confidence as well as to open up professional and intellectual opportunities. Furthermore, Thacker and Novak (1991) found that women students aged 35-44 wanted to gain a degree, achieve independence, acquire new skills and vocational achievement, whereas those aged 45-64 wanted an intellectual challenge. Another study (Carlton and Soulsby, 1999) showed that personal factors may also refer to the experience of adults from their early schooling as failures, being frustrated by a lack of support for further guidance. These adults returning to higher education aim to prove their capability to undertake further study. Conversely, older people are more likely to join for their own purposes, to follow their own interests, or to bring about greater understanding and control in their lives. They become convinced by self-determination in their own choice of learning, for their own circumstances (p.74). The NIACE 2002 survey showed 12% of respondents answered ‘I feel I am too old’ (see Table 2.4). This reflects a number of older adults who themselves often absorb negative attitudes and consider themselves to be of little value. ‘I feel I am too old’ makes many older adults believe it is something to be achieved at a young age. The idea of personal development is especially important for older people to draw on the value of their life experience, knowledge and perspective in ways which can benefit younger people.

The NIACE 2002 survey also showed, as I mentioned earlier (see Table 2.3), that more than half of the respondents (58%) answered ‘work related’ as the reason for current/ recent learning. The vocational orientation is still a significant trigger among adults returning to learn, I shall now discuss.
2.4.4 Work-related factors

In Chapters Three and Four I shall examine the changes of women's lives in the UK and Taiwan since 1940s due to the rapid development of social and economic factors in both countries. Women's lives are examined through, for instance, the social trends after the Second World War, the increasing divorce rate, the change of gender and family ideology and women's involvement in the labour market. Details of the social background during the periods adult returnees were brought up are shown in previous chapters. Thus, in this section I shall examine adults' behaviour on returning to learn as related to social factors. Pat Davies (2001) in her study on mature students' decision-making indicated that:

Both the potential entrants and the new entrants in our study recognised the economic benefits of studying at the higher education level. ...Among the new entrants, career enhancement and employment issues were major motivating factors, with higher education seen as preparation for a new career or a means to enhance prospects in previous or current employment. ...Among potential entrants there was considerable dissatisfaction with their current job and a strong sense that a higher education qualification would enable them to engage with the opportunities for improved employment that they thought were 'out there' in a fairly buoyant labour market (pp.23-27).

Davies indicated that in general there was a clear and widespread belief that there were strong economic benefits from a higher education qualification in the longer term. In Cross's early study *Adults as Learners* (1981), the idea of leisure interests was not stressed among the respondents. However, twenty years later, the NIACE 2002 survey included a significant discussion on leisure interests and their relationship with adult participation in learning. In the 21st century as the era of information technology, leisure has become something that cannot be ignored in adults' lives.

2.4.5 Leisure Factors

The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of leisure makes the point neatly: 'Freedom or opportunity to do something specific or implied', and in the narrower sense, 'opportunity
afforded by freedom from occupation'. Frequently, some subjects will present themselves as ‘leisure’ subjects to some people and ‘vocational’ to others; it depends on their motives for studying them. Leisure activities provide a bridge into active learning. On the other hand, many people learn from their leisure activities without realising what knowledge they are gaining. Furthermore, there are evident differences in leisure activities among surveys due to people's working status, family duties and fewer opportunities for ‘leisure’. For instance, for older people who are not ‘working’, the word ‘leisure’ offers more freedom, and really can provide, after many years of structured work, ‘the opportunity afforded by freedom from occupation’. For many young people who are unemployed, leisure may well be enforced and therefore less attractive. Lack of money is a possibility. For people from different cultural backgrounds the idea of ‘hard working’ may involve much fewer leisure activities compared with others. Leisure may be curtailed.

In the NIACE 2002 survey (see Table 2.2) the most frequently cited reasons for participation were interest in the subject (34%) and the enjoyment of learning (31%). 25% of the respondents look the learning activity ‘to develop myself as a person’. It shows a significant number of respondents regard learning as the idea of leisure activity. The NIACE 2002 findings also indicated people who are currently studying are much more likely to go out for leisure purposes than people who are not studying. As might be expected, the association is very strong in respect of activities that tend to go together with learning (Sargant & Aldridge, 2003:35).

Adult participation in learning is a matter of choice and has to be fitted in with work, family and other interests and obligations. Hence the use of leisure is affected by opportunity, and social changes are combining with technological changes to expand some opportunities while others are being contracted or even closed down. Increasingly some people are learning in the workplace, whether for work or personal reasons. For some people the boundaries between work and leisure are virtually invisible. According to the results of the 2002, 1999 and 1996 surveys, people still spend more time watching television (over 3-and-a-half hours per day) than they do on any other activity except sleeping and working (if they are in work).
have more leisure time than women and this gap is widening as more women enter the labour market but still have to cope with the commitments of work and family.

The proportions recording social activities as their main leisure interest have remained stable across the 20 years at 44% to 46% (from 1980 to 2002). Reading dominated the list in 1980 (48%) and 1990 (51%) but has dropped by 10% to 41%, yet is still the most important activity among women (51%) in 2002. Sports and physical activities showed a big increase between 1980 and 1990 and now appear stable. They now have equal ranking with reading at 41%, though men engage in sports much more than women (49% compared with 35%).

Lastly, due to the impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on participation the geographical barriers may be diminished significantly through technology. The NIACE 2002 survey included the findings of ‘access to, and use of, ICT’ which might alleviate problems such as lack of time, cost and caring responsibilities and may encourage wider participation via virtual college, on the other hand, the leisure interests may closely link with technology, but this was not examined in the NIACE 2002 survey.

I shall now briefly review the participation of adult women in adult education since the majority of participants in my study were involved in classes related to adult education in both countries.

2.4.6 Participation of Adult Women Students in Adult Education

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the notion that women’s place was in the home was still strong. The Norwood Report in 1943 stressed the importance of relating boys’ education to the labour market, but emphasized that girls’ schooling must relate to their eventual place in the family. However, the rhetoric of the 1944 Act was that of equality of access. This concentration on access rather than equality of outcome allowed women’s secondary status
and subordination to still remain invisible and women were silenced by the ideology of equal opportunities (Wilson, 1980). During this time women’s participation in education took its tone from current social policy which continued to emphasise the importance of motherhood and the family.

Women were to be educated for the well-being of their family through a wider curriculum, still based on domestic skills but to be made more attractive by, for example, the inclusion in cookery classes of discussion on ‘the planning of a balanced diet’ and classes in house craft and home management to include ‘repair and decoration to fabric and furniture, planning good colour schemes, the best organisation of domestic equipment’. Women should be educated about broader interests such as education, housing, town planning, etc. (Ministry of Education, 1947).

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars reviewed developments to improve access for groups under-represented in education began to gather momentum (Malcolm, 1992), Liverpool, for instance, pioneered a model of student-centred, community-based programmes for working-class groups. This period also saw the start of an expansion of adult learning opportunities for other ‘excluded’ groups.

The time of rapid growth of interest in education for women coincided with severe funding cuts and many women’s courses were developed with short term funding which remained marginal to institutional provision and were the first to disappear in the various rounds of cuts of the late 1980s and 1990s (ibid). Participation of men increased more than for women between 1982 and 1990, particularly in accredited courses although the proportion of women was still much higher in non-accredited adult education (Sargant, 1991). Even in 1995, women experienced constraints in adult education, which could have been from earlier experiences in school and work, lack of confidence, inappropriate provision or were cultural in origin. Much provision tailored to women’s needs was threatened by student and institutional funding problems, inadequate child care facilities and a lack of political support for women’s education and training (McGivney, 1994b).

During the Thatcher years there appeared to be an anti-feminist return to Victorian family ideology. The reduction in the Welfare State re-imposed domestic burdens on women.
The employment situation with the massive increase in women’s part-time work increased the need for education and training for women whilst lack of financial subsidies put it out of the reach of more and more (Coats, 1993).

This brief overview shows that women were present in adult education but not treated equally, with a curriculum restricted to the division of labour in the home and the demands for a cheap workforce. In the late twentieth century, women were in the majority in much adult education, and gradually at least some provision was developed to meet their particular requirements. The following section looks at the way that barriers for continuing education changed and how the barriers to returning were lowered. The participation of adults in education somehow marks a life change of each individual. If I regard the participation of adults in education as behaviour then the idea of life transformation should be the motivation which turns the idea of learning into action.

2.4.7 Issues of Barriers for Adults Returning to Learn

The theoretical approaches to research on barriers tend to treat the issue as part of theories on participation. Cross (1981:98) in her seminal work *Adults as Learners* classified barriers to participation under three headings:

*Situational barriers: those arising from one’s personal life at a given time
*Institutional barriers: those consist of all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational learning
*Dispositional barriers: these related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner

She collected the data from two earlier national surveys across thirty states, (for details and citation see Cross 1979; Cross and Zusman 1979) and found that in all survey research, situational barriers are the most significant, ranging from 10% of respondents citing factors such as lack of child care or transportation to about 50% mentioning cost or lack of time. The cost of education and lack of time lead all other barriers and are viewed as equal places
among the obstacles to education. They are mentioned more often by people in their 30s and 40s than by those younger or older, more often by the highly educated than by the poorly educated, and more often by those in high-income occupations than by those in low-paying jobs (Cross and Zusman, 1979). Cross (1981) found that the major emphasis in adult learning was on the practical - obtaining skills - rather than on acquiring knowledge. However, years later in a Scottish survey (Munn and MacDonald, 1988), 41% of respondents also cited a personal interest or hobby as their main reason for participation. This confirms another of Cross's (1981) findings: that people are increasingly engaging in education for interest and personal development.

These opportunities and barriers recur in more recent studies. In a National Adult Learning Survey (NALS), Beinart and Smith (1997) categorise three main groups of barriers deterring participation which reflect on Cross's classification. They found some answers which result from the current social and economic background such as constraints of the benefits system. A more recent study conducted by NIACE/ National Youth Agency investigating the Young Adult Learners project on low take-up of basic skills among young adults presents the types of barriers reported by young adult participants (Bryan, 2001). The details are as follows:

2.4.8 Situational Barriers

The lack of good and affordable childcare - NALS found this to be one of the most common reasons given by women for not returning to education. The lack of information - some 20% of NALS respondents cited lack of knowledge of local learning opportunities. Geographical isolation - people living in rural areas are less likely than average to have time to engage in learning (Tremlett et al., 1995). Older students (aged 25+) are more concerned with location and nearness to 'home' than younger students when choosing to which University to apply.
(Connor et al., 1999). For Bryan (2001), practical barriers which could be overcome by sensitive provision; such as childcare provision at no cost, the timing and location of opportunities - some said they would want to learn at home or close to home. The actual financial and opportunity costs were also seen as a major barrier (p.7).

2.4.9 Institutional Barriers

According to Cross (1981) institutional barriers such as inconvenient schedules or locations, full-time fees for part-time study, inappropriate course of study, among others (p.98). McGivney (1993a) summarised a system unresponsive to the needs of adult learners in terms of teaching/learning strategies, timetabling and admission to courses; also a lack of adequate information and publicity about learning opportunities (pp.17-22). In other studies like Bryan's (1997) for the project *Young Adult Learners*, the barriers posed by institutions summarised as: (i) inappropriate attitudes and skills of staff; (ii) low-level co-ordination between providers and referral agencies; (iii) inadequate child-care provision; (iv) excessively bureaucratic regulations; (v) inflexible funding regimes; (vi) underdeveloped guidance procedures and uneven provision post-18; (vii) unclear information on progression route (p.153).

2.4.10 Dispositional barriers

The lack of confidence - fear of failure and individuals' lack of confidence in their ability to learn appear in interviews as one of the major obstacles (for example, lack of time etc.) given as 'face-saving' reasons (McGivney 1990; 1999). In terms of lack of motivation, findings from NALS showed that 39% of respondents preferred to spend their free time doing other things. Younger adults in *NIACE/National Youth Agency Young Adult Learners Partnership*
(YALP) recognised their own lack of confidence and negative attitude towards learning created a major barrier to progress. The latter study showed the key barriers seemed to be psychological such as young people's own lack of determination, and difficulties anticipated in establishing a routine and being on time for each session. Others referred to the (perceived) attitudes of teachers believed to be unsympathetic to the needs of young adults deficient in basic skills and slow to learn (Bryan, 2001:7). In the study of barriers of older learners in the International Educational Study (IES), a similar proportion felt they had better things to do than learning (Dench and Regan, 2000). Perceptions of irrelevance were also noted: for example, the perception of being too old; regarding training as only associated with a new job; satisfaction with current task (manual work); possession of sufficient qualifications. The feeling of being too old, as discussed earlier reflects the negative feelings of older adults in terms of personal development. However, once the negative feeling has been overcome or eliminated, older adults become convinced by self-determination in their own choice of learning, for their own circumstances.

Among the three categories of barriers to learning, NIACE surveys in 2002 have shown that there are differences between male and female respondents, as Table 2.5 shows: female respondents show they have encountered more situational and institutional barriers than their male counterparts except when they spoke about work pressures or not being able to get time off work. More females than males adults replied that they feel too old to learn. However, most of time the three types of barriers may possibly be integrated in adult participants when returning to learn, such as lack of time may result in lack of confidence on undertaking academic courses, regardless of age and gender. The issues of barriers are complex among adult respondents, as the results of barriers cannot be simply regarded as negative impacts once the types of barriers have been overcome. For example once the older adults have overcome the type of anxiety about learning, they become convinced by self-determination in their own choice of learning, for their own circumstances.
Table 2.5 Barriers to learning by categories and gender, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispositional barriers</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>1875%</td>
<td>1945%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested/ don’t want to</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am too old</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel no need to learn anymore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(phrased as ‘I know all I need to know’ in 1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am too ill/ too disabled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am worried about being out alone</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the qualifications I need</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the abilities I need</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am too nervous about the idea of starting learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situational barriers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work/ other time pressures</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/ money/ can’t afford it</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare arrangements/ caring for others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t got round to doing it</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not be able to get time off work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel confident enough</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know what is available</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional barriers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport/ too far to travel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am put off by tests and exams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suitable courses are available</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunity to learn in other tongue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NIACE 2002

2.4.11 Chain Models

I have adapted the idea from Patricia K Cross’s (1981) Chain-of-Model (COM) to illustrate the ideas of barriers and opportunities and their relations with other variables such as early learning experience (A), attitudes toward education (B), participation (C), barriers (D), opportunities (E), information (F), expectation and important goals (G) and life transition (H).

According to Figure 2.3 adult participants whose attitudes toward education (B) are possibly influenced by respondents’ early experiences (A) regardless whether positive or negative. Attitudes toward education (B) lead to participation (C) to learning activity. The participation (C) may be restricted when barriers (D) occurred; however, it is possible to be enhanced when
opportunities (E) occurred. The reverse arrows between barriers (D) and opportunities (E) indicate the linear interaction between the two variables when adults return to learn. Adults’ participation (C) is related to life transition (H) as the trigger returning to learn, and vice versa. Adult respondents use the types of information (F) provided by the institution to gain learning opportunities (E). The variable ‘information’ (F) has the connection with participants’ early learning experience (A) and their expectation and important goals (G) on participating in learning. The reverse arrow from (G) to (A) reflects the relations between adults’ early learning experience and expectation of current learning activity. In this chain model, I try to illustrate the implication in the order of variables in the chain model so as to show the forces for and against barriers and opportunities among other variables. However, the linearity cannot present the power of impacts made by each factor, particularly the power of different factors on barriers and opportunities. As the result, it is also hard to test the degree of strength on opportunities when barriers are changed.

Figure 2.3 A Chain Module on Barriers and Opportunities
(Adapted from Patricia Cross)
2.5 Conclusion

The chapter starts from the theoretical framework of globalisation and its impacts on higher education. The global trends in Taiwan may not be completely similar to what has occurred in the UK due to the local socio-economic and cultural context. Both the UK and Taiwan seek knowledge-based labour in the societies where information technology is the leading force. And this has influenced the structure of higher education. Adult women returnees are benefiting from the rapid increase in higher education institutions resulting not only from the vitalisation of higher education expansion but also the self-awareness of personal capacity.

In addition, Taiwan is affected by the global trends. The Taiwan government started to restructure higher education institutions after the cancellation of martial law in the 1980s. The increase of private colleges and universities and the launch of the ‘lifelong learning society’ were a result of the local socio-economic context in the 1990s. It shows that educational opportunities were increased not only because of global trends but also as the result of the local socio-economic context. Taiwan seems to show that local force may be stronger than global trends. Later the changes of women’s lives were examined through their participation in work and the improvement of gender equality. Adult women have gained more opportunities in jobs and an equal status in the private sphere; however, there is still a need for more efforts to be made between the two sexes.

In the following chapters, I shall look at the process of social and educational changes in the UK and Taiwan in order to draw out the issue of barriers in subsequent chapters.
Chapter Three
The Changes of Women’s Lives and Educational Opportunities in the UK since the 1940s

3.1 Introduction

The women returnees in the UK in this study are aged between their thirties and sixties. Those born in the 1940s are now in their sixties. The economic development and social conditions in British society had changed significantly after World War II as in many other industrialised countries. Many changes took places in the attitudes and life-styles of people during the late 1940s which seem quite remote from the life-style of people today. In order to have a clear idea of the environment in which these women returnees were brought up, it will be necessary to review British society trends during the post war years. Thus Part One looks in more detail at the process of social trends in England after the Second World. In Part Two I will discuss the barriers and opportunities in terms of gender inequality when returning to learn beyond the social context.

3.2 Part One: Social Trends After the Second World War

In Britain, the 20th century was marked as a period of the transformation of women’s position, particularly the changes that occurred in the post-war years. From women’s points of view, Britain in the second half of the 20th century presents a rather different picture. Lewis (1992:2) indicated three social trends that have been significant for women born in post-war years:

First, the increase in the percentage of married women in paid employment; second, the dramatic increase in the divorce rate, especially during the 1970s and 1980s; and third, what has been called ‘the amazing rise of illegitimacy’ (Hartley, 1966), which began in the 1960s and has increased rapidly again since the late 1970s.
There has been considerable growth in the proportion of the adult female population engaged in the labour market outside their home since the post-war years, and much of this increase has occurred amongst married women, particularly those who were mothers of dependent children and who took part-time jobs, ‘working 30 or fewer hours each week’ (Department of Employment 1973-80). However, among these women many were involved in part-time employment that was attributable to the expansion of the service sector. ‘Approximately four-fifths of part-time women workers were employed in this sector’ (Mallier and Rosser, 1979).

In her recent book Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001) indicated that despite the greater increase of the participation in jobs the whole situation did not change much in terms of gender equality:

While many women were employed in professional and managerial occupations, clerical, secretarial and service-based jobs were the most popular and women earned, on average, about four-fifths of the male rate’ (pp. 5).

Referring to the earlier times, Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001) described that marriage was aimed to be the destination of women’s lives: ‘conventionally, marriage was portrayed as women’s true destiny and the only respectable path to motherhood...’(ibid). But the ideology changed in the 1960s and 70s when women gained control over their fertility in which ‘there was a sharp decline, and the number of children per woman has remained fairly stable at about 1.7 since the mid 1970s’ (2001: 7). In addition, the equality in secondary education (see Chapter Two) and the increased opportunities in new universities in the 1960s raised the ideology of women creating more ‘human capital’. Women have undoubtedly increased their paid employment despite many women stopping working after childbirth.

The following sections will look at the changes of women’s involvement in the workforce and women’s marital lives in British society since the 1940s.
3.2.1 Women's Involvement in the Labour Market during the Post-war Year

There has been a remarkable post-war increase in women's paid employment. Since the mid-1960s, the trend in employment rates for men has been gradually downwards. The picture for women is very different. Employment rates among women rose from 47% to 68% between 1959 and 1999 (see Table 3.1). During the post-war years, more women were entering paid employment, particularly the increase of women forces in employment in service industries.

Table 3.1 Employment rates: by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At Summer each year. In 1959 to 1971, males aged 15 to 64 and females aged 15 to 59; from 1972 onwards males aged 16 to 64 and females 16 to 59.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, 2001

The reason for the increasing number of women joining the labour market can be seen from its social context. In the post-war years, the government had started to plan to keep in the labour force as many as possible of the women who had entered it during the war. However, there were more women returned home than had been hoped after the war ended. Few job opportunities were actually extended to women despite the government's anxiety to keep women in their paid employment. Women were still expected to take up the jobs they had traditionally filled, and most remained in lower status, poorly paid white-collar and service occupations although they did not always accept this willingly. Many women indicated their
intention to return to the workforce when their children were older. Improvements such as better housing conditions and advanced domestic technology all made it more possible for women to combine home duties and motherhood with paid work. The phenomenon was reinforced by the increased figures of labour participation of women, cited in Deirdre McCloskey’s article Paid Work (2001:169) which indicated ‘the labour force participation of British women aged 25-34 (the prime years for having pre-school children) rose from 29.5 percent in 1961 to 38.4 percent in 1971 to 48.6 percent in 1981’.

Despite the increased number of married women involved in a paid employment, married women were still in charge of the domestic work themselves, as Table 3.2 shows: on average in the UK, the amount of time taken up by housework for women changed little. However, there is a distinct fall in the housework burden of working-class housewives, accompanied by a rise in the hours worked by middle-class women (the result was coinciding with the decisive decline of middle-class women in keeping living-in servants) until in the 1960s that also began to fall. The situation of women mainly in charge of the domestic work remained in the late 20th century, as Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001) observed: ‘women still perform the overwhelming majority of housework and most had to cope with full-time job a double burden occur, …and there has not been a commensurate rise in men’s share of domestic labour or childcare’ (page 6).

On the other hand, women’s involvement in paid employment relied on their social class (also see 2.7). In the inter-war years middle-class women entered the labour market for the years between education and marriage and then overwhelmingly left it permanently. Working-class women tended to take paid work after marriage whenever household finances required it. Then later they would withdraw when children became old enough to contribute to the household income. From the late 1940s the number of women aged over thirty-five returning to paid work after a period of childbearing climbed. And the number kept increasing until the 1960s also among the middle class, while most mothers took some years out of the labour market to care for their children. Thereafter, a two-phase work pattern was established as the norm for most women. This means that women’s concerns have been very different in
the post-war period. The model of a male breadwinner has become less and less dominant while married women increasingly combined housewifery and employment. Particularly among middle-class professional women, many remained in employment in the 1990s despite their children still being young. This could be a result from the improvement of women's education. Also, together with the legislation of the Equal Pay Act and employment practices, job opportunity has become increasingly contested by a majority of women.

Table 3.2 Average number of minutes per day devoted to housework by men and women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>UK Homemakers</th>
<th>UK Housewives</th>
<th>UK female working class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>UK female middle class</th>
<th>UK males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n/a


3.2.2 Women’s Paid Employment and Dependent Children

The current situation of a dependent child in the family still plays a significant role in the economic activity of women. It shows that about 44% of women of working age had dependent children in Spring 2001 (see Table 3.3) and only 18% of women whose youngest child was under 5 worked full-time. However the proportion of women, whose youngest
dependent children were aged 16-18, in full time paid employment reached 44 percent in 2001 compared with a decade earlier. Nearly 50 percent of women working full-time had no dependent children between 1991 and 2001. The proportion remained almost the same for this group of women in paid employment. It is possible to interpret that women without dependent children tended to stay in a full-time job or a full-time job tended to be suitable for women with no dependent children.

Table 3.3 Economic activity status of women (1): by age of youngest dependent child
1991-2001 UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of youngest dependent child</th>
<th>Under 5</th>
<th>5-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-18</th>
<th>No dependent children</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991  working full-time</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  working part-time</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  Unemployed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  Looking after family</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  Students (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  Other inactive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991  All (=100%)(million)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  working full-time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  working part-time</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  Looking after family</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  Students (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  Other inactive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001  All (=100%)(million)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Aged 16-59. At Spring each year.
2 Those in full-time education.

Again, Table 3.3 shows among women with pre-school children, about one third were working part-time (36%) and more than one third of women were economically inactive and looking after family and home (38%). According to a recent Labour Force Survey indicated:
Overall, about 7.9 million people in the UK were classified as economically inactive in Spring 2001. These people are of working age, but for a variety of reasons either are not looking for paid work or not available to start work, the majority (72%) do not want a job (Labour Force Survey, 2001).

It has been understood that looking after a family is a major factor in women's labour market participation and in fact this was the reason for not wanting a job for about half the women. British society in the years 1945 to 1957 was affected by a severe economic depression. Those who were just reaching adulthood had spent their formative childhood years at a time when living standards were rising. However, the country was undergoing the frustration of the immediate post-war years although there was modest prosperity. There was a need for a labour force which encouraged more women to stay in paid employment. In addition, the smaller family size resulted from the drop in fertility rate in which working-class families were having the smallest number of children, whereas middle-class parents were beginning to have slightly larger families. But the two-child norm was the common phenomenon established in the post-war years. Due to the war many women decided to delay marriage or childbirth. Obviously there was a new life-cycle pattern for women and this pattern remained into the 1990s. As mentioned above, a two-phase work pattern (childbearing and paid employment) was established as the norm for most women (see Chapter Two). The improvements in housing and advanced domestic technology have reduced the heavy labour of housework that is usually in the charge of women. Women started to spend their time on themselves in terms of self-fulfilment. In addition, single women and older married women who most probably stay in full-time employment look towards improving their self-image since these women tended to be economically active and have more free time for themselves. Thus for some women education becomes the vehicle to fulfil their personal needs at this stage of life.

In the next section I move on to the change of marital behaviour in the past in which the increased divorce rate, cohabitation and remarriage have brought women both opportunities and obstacles in their lives. As marital behaviour changed, women tended to be more
dominant in their lives. However, on the other hand, the increased single parent households, particularly those headed by women, tended to restrict women from participating in education while childrearing and family economics became the major burden.

3.2.3 Divorce Rate Increased, the Cohabitation and Remarriage

Pat Thane (1994) in her brief introduction about the marriage and family in Britain since the post-war years, indicated how marriage and family life were affected by the war in Britain. Divorce reached a peak in 1947 with about ten times the pre-war figures. The Legal Aid Act was passed in 1949 and opened the possibility of divorce to many who had previously been deterred by the expense. Figure 3.1 shows the changes of marriages and divorces between 1950 and 2003 in the UK. The divorce rate peaked again in 1985 after there was a change in the law in 1984 that allowed divorce after one year of marriage instead of after three. And many people remarried, recreating in modern form the life cycle and complex family patterns of past centuries. Looking back at how divorce changed the family structure and how this might be the result of the policy made at an earlier time in Britain, the 2006 Social Trends indicated:

The number of divorces taking place each year in Great Britain more than doubled between 1958-1969. By 1972 the number of divorces had doubled again. The latter increase was partly a result of the Divorce Reform Act 1969 in England and Wales which came into effect in 1971 (Social Trends, 2006:27).

Interestingly, the ideology has also shifted from women marrying someone older than themselves to a tendency nowadays to marry someone younger. The 2006 Social Trends surveys show:

In England and Wales, three quarters of women marry men older than themselves. However, an increasing proportion of women are marrying younger men. The proportion of couples where the husband was younger than the wife increased from 15 percent for those who married in 1963 to 26 percent for those who married in 2003. Over the same period, the proportion of couples where the man was at most five years older than the woman fell from just under two thirds to just under a half (pp.26).
The change of ideology of women marrying someone younger may provide the tendency of younger women nowadays to be more dominant in their own lives rather than obeying the pattern of marriages that their mothers or grandmothers followed decades ago.

As remarriage became part of the phenomenon of marital behaviour, the 2006 Social Trends reported:

For one or both partners, (this) increased by a third between 1971 and 1972 (after the introduction of the Divorce Reform Act 1969) in the United Kingdom, and peaked at 141,900 in 1988. In 2003, there were 123,300 remarriages, accounting for two fifths of all marriages (ibid: 27).

Cohabitation is another type of relationship often to be seen in the modern family structure. The 2006 Report reported:

The proportion of non-married people cohabiting has increased greatly since the mid-1980s among both men and women. The rise in co-habitation may in part be related to people marrying later in life. The percentage of non-married men and women under the age of 60 cohabiting in Great Britain increased between 1986 and 2004 from 11 percent to 24 percent for men and from 13 percent to 25 percent for women (ibid).
The Surveys also found the age of co-habiting couples tended to be younger than married couple families. This implies again the change of ideology upon marital behaviour of the younger generation and younger women gaining more dominance in their own lives:

In 2001, 50 percent of co-habiting couple families in the United Kingdom were headed by a person aged beyond 35 compared with only 12 percent of married couple families (ibid).

The delay of marriages, the increase of divorces and cohabitation, remarriages and more women marrying younger men indicated that women’s attitudes toward marriage have changed in the past decades. Women tend to be more dominant and gain more freedom from their own marital lives and this dominant power of women upon marital behaviour would be completely different from their mother’s and grandmother’s generations. Particularly the delay of marriages may result from staying on in education, the involvement of job markets and the changes of female attitudes, and vice versa. Nowadays a return to education may become an important vehicle for women to seek self-fulfilment.

The change of ideology resulted in more women heading households in modern British society. Also, the increased opportunities in education and employment delay the time for childbirth, and even more women remain single or childless.

In the next section I shall reflect a phenomenon that has occurred since the 1990s. I argue that the phenomenon is closely related to the opportunities and barriers to returning to learn in terms of women’s greater dominance upon their own lives.

3.2.4 The Women Headed Lone Parent, Late Fertility and Childlessness

The family structure has been changed in the past decades, there are more lone-parent families and smaller family size. The increase in one-person households particularly in those headed by women has become part of the current family structure since the late 1990s. The latest Social Trends indicate that ‘between 1971 and 2005 the proportion of lone-parent household with dependent children doubled, to 7 percent of households in 2005’ (Social Trends, 2006:22). I argue that having more lone-parent households and fewer households of a
couple with dependent children indicates that women are facing different life styles. The former may encounter more difficulties in economy and time; the latter may have more free time for themselves since they have no or fewer children in the household. The reduced burden from household and family may possibly encourage more women returning to learn; however, it could also constrain women’s chances from returning to learn.

Another important change in family structure and relationship, as found in 2006 Social Trends, was the increase in the number of adults who live with their parents.

Some young people may remain at home while in education or because of economic necessity, such as difficulties entering the housing market, others may simply choose to continue living with their parents. Young men were more likely than young women to live with their parents (Social Trends, 2006: 22).

The delay of marriage or the extended time on attending education may encourage young women and men to remain at home. However, it could also be the increasing unemployment rate that deters young adults from moving out from their parents’ house. However, there is no strong evidence to show why there were more young men likely than young women to live with their parents. It is possible to interpret that naturally women may tend to follow the traditional pattern to enter family life rather than staying at home once they approach marriageable ages.

Other significant changes included childlessness, late fertility and children outside of marriage. According to the 2006 report:

Forty percent of women born in 1949 were still childless at age 25; this increased to 69 percent for women aged 25 who were born in 1979. There also has been a rise of childlessness at age 35 from 15 percent of those born in 1949 to 27 percent to those born in 1969” (p. 29).

These may possibly result from the introduction and spread of birth control pills, women’s changed attitudes to family size, delayed entry into marriage, cohabitation and the increase of women’s participation in education and the labour market that have encouraged the trends toward late child-rearing and smaller family size.

The above discussion indicates that the changes upon women’s lives mostly occurred between the 1960s and 1980s in the UK. Women seem to have gained more support from the
social structures. The changes of gender segregation in the family also play a significant role in women’s private sectors that usually tend to be the decisive factors when adult women decided to return to learn. Women’s duties as mother and housewife were reported as the main barriers while they decided to return to higher education.

Next I shall move on to gender inequality occurring in school, family and employment; the results will show that women’s lives have remained inferior to men’s despite the greater increased opportunities in education and paid employment for women in the past decades.

3.3 Part Two: Barriers and Opportunities: The Changes of Gender Inequality at School, in Employment and Family

In this section I shall firstly look at the changes of barriers and opportunities at school in which gender inequality has improved greatly for girls in the past decades in the UK. While girls have gained more educational opportunities, the traditional subject stereotypes still exist and this will definitely later affect on girls’ participation in ‘women’s work’ in the labour market. Secondly, I shall discuss the gender inequality in employment and current issues such as part time work, traditional stereotypes in men’s and women’s jobs, and gender difference in pay gaps will also be brought into discussion. Lastly, I discuss girls’ position in the family where females still carry the traditional views as a mother and housewife in the family despite having paid employment outside the home. The dominant culture of a society rests on the economic, political and social organisation of that society, and these also influence how people act and think. The barriers and opportunities of women returnees are examined in relation to the government policy changes in the UK in the past decades. The social and structural changes may successfully transform women’s lives in terms of gender equality; however, some may remain for both men and women and prove hard to remove or challenge, such as stereotypes of school subjects and job segregations.
3.3.1 Gender Inequality at School

Throughout the twentieth century, there was an awareness that girls’ attainment differed from that of boys, both in level and in subject. The current stereotypes of girls’ and boys’ and also women’s and men’s roles in society still remained somehow despite the greater improvement for educational achievement in girls. Decades ago, Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) indicated women transcend the sexual division of labour, or successfully combine marriage and a career. But it was hard for them to challenge the ideology of the division of labour and, as the result they must accept the culture of sexual division of labour, and the cultural determination of their position in society. Thirty years later, the situation for girls has been improved greatly but the inequality somehow remained as Arnott et al. (1999) stated:

In England and Wales, the closure of the gender gap up to age sixteen and changing patterns of achievement in post-compulsory education and training stands as a testimony to this transformation (p. 30).

A significant positive impact on the achievement of gender equality in education made by legislative policies and development such as the Education Act 1944 established the principle of free secondary education from which girls were afforded equal opportunities in education alongside boys. School leaving age rose to 16 in 1972, although girls traditionally stayed on longer than boys. The development of the Women’s Movement in the 1970s had vitalised gender equality in education.

On the other hand, class and ethnicity remained important factors when gender inequality was discussed although this inequality seemed to be even more complex when class and ethnicity were added. In the post-war period, middle-class girls were not expected to be too bothered about domestic skills but were encouraged to prepare for a career (see also Chapter Two). Middle-class girls aimed to achieve academically whilst keeping their femininity; although they prepared for a career, the reality was that they would probably spend more years in domestic activities than in employment. By contrast, working-class girls were in less academic schools and lower streams in which they were not expected to prepare for work -
any of the traditional semi-skilled women’s jobs would do. Working-class girls were expected to learn skills for their future domestic role, no matter that for them the reality would be a dual role for all or at least part of their lives. Thirty years later, ethnicity and class became even more complex when the issue of gender equality is discussed. Gillborn and Mirza (2000) said:

There is evidence that the inequality of attainment between social classes has grown since the late 1980s. For example, in relation to the five higher grades benchmark, between 1988 and 1997, the gap between ‘managerial/professional’ backgrounds, and ‘unskilled manual groups’ grew from 40 to 49 percentage points (p.18).

Further:

Ethnic differences appear to have increased with the pressure of performance-oriented schooling, and social class differences in educational achievement are being sustained if not aggravated; statistics on the gender gap nationally therefore can distort the picture (ibid).

Regarding the issues of barriers which girls cannot overcome in terms of gender equality, Deem (1978) had a lucid observation and concluded that:

Women in capitalist societies have a different and subordinate position in the division of labour compared with men, some of the knowledge, skills, values and ideas presented in schools are of no use to women, except as confirmation of their position in the sexual division of labour (p. 22).

Deem, nearly thirty years ago, suggested that women’s subordinate position still remained in some aspects although gender inequality seemed to have greatly lessened in education. The latest figures show ‘girls’ enrolment in pre-school, primary and secondary education is between approximately 49 and 52 percent of total enrolments’ (UNESCO International Bureau of Education; DfES, 2002: 26). Girls are doing remarkably well in “men’s subjects” such as Mathematics and Science:

In 1995, seven-year old girls had a head start in Mathematics (81% of girls reached the expected level compared with 77% of boys) and 86% of girls and 83% of boys reached the expected level in Science. Girls’ success in Science and Mathematics now follows them through to the school leaving examinations at 16 where again girls perform exceptionally well in these subjects (http://portal.unesco.org).
What concerned the scholars was ‘the new gender gap: girls are now outperforming boys’ (EOC, 2003:3). The great improvement of girls’ education was caused by the state policy which favoured girls education; for example, during the post-war period, the traditional family values were promoted by Labour governments to construct a welfare state that would require an advanced female labour force. Girls were expected to gain more education and this notion was emphasised due to the development of the women’s movement around that period. A range of new policies had helped the gender gap to be improved such as ‘school leaving examinations in 1984 and a compulsory curriculum in 1988 which redistributed educational credentials, although not intentionally, in favour of girls (Arnot et al, 1996).

In addition, gender inequality also remained in subject areas which still reflected the gender stereotypes. Arnot et al. (1999) further examined the inequality in school subjects and said:

Although the introduction of a common examination and common curriculum removed the separate educational/curriculum tracks for boys and girls that had structured the educational system previously it did not prevent young men and women choosing sex stereotyped subjects and in post 16 vocational and academic courses (pp 21-22).

Gender stereotyping occurred at other qualification levels such as degrees:

Men are over-represented in Engineering and Technology whereas women are over-represented in Education and the Humanities. Further Education is also heavily gender stereotyped (EOC, 1998:1).

The consequences lead to the future vocational orientation that women still find themselves in what have traditionally been called ‘women’s work’ I shall illustrate this later in the section on employment (also see 3.3.2.).

As mentioned earlier, recent concern about gender inequality has led to girls doing remarkably well compared with boys in Sciences and Mathematics. Despite government legislation, in post 16 vocational and academic courses, young men and women were choosing sex stereotyped subjects. Gender inequality is continuing at school and this pattern will be found later with a considerable influence on the type of employment adults are qualified for.
Many facts as mentioned above show that gender inequality has greatly decreased and recent concern has shifted to the underachievement of boys. Although the government tried to tackle the issue of gender equality in jobs, it cannot be ignored that gender issues still remain in areas such as women's work, women tending to work part-time, and the pay gaps between the two sexes in the English labour market. This will be examined in the next section.

3.3.2 Gender Inequality in Employment

Although the opportunities in education and jobs for women have been enlarged greatly, there are still worrying gaps in gender equality in the labour market. Studies show women's involvement in the labour market is steadily increasing. According to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) women are still disadvantaged and in a subordinate position in many areas of the labour market. 'There is also a growing convergence between the participation of women and men in paid work. But this convergence masks deep and enduring differences in the nature of their contribution to the labour market' (EOC, 2000a: 1). Despite women now making up almost half of the work force and moving into higher levels of professional jobs in greater numbers, it is indicated that most women will remain in traditional female occupations. As the EOC (2000a) points out:

> Gender segregation between industries and in working hours creates inflexibility in the labour market, inhibits men and women from achieving their full potential and limits the pool of skilled labour available to employers. Gender, rather than an individual's skills and abilities, continues to be a major determinant of individual economic prosperity.

It is worth mentioning here the changes of structures in the British economy as the service industries started to provide more employment than the construction and manufacturing industries had done previously. As the result, many working class men lost their jobs and expected their wives to support their family economically. Meanwhile middle class men were also redundant and bankrupted when the service sector was restructured in the late 20th century. Many women then became the head of families or single parent while the divorce
rate increased. Also, dual career families began to appear. The changes of barriers and opportunities related to family structure will be discussed later.

A recent study completed by Tomlinson et al. (2005), investigating women returning to work, found: ‘Women returnees (to work) form a quarter of female labour force in the UK’ which implied that a large number of females felt encouraged to participate in paid employment (both part- and full-time). However, it seems the type of occupations in which women returnees participated to be as limited as three decades earlier. Tomlinson et al. (2005) said:

In 2005 mothers returning to part-time were heavily concentrated in four occupations: elementary administrations; sales and customer services; caring personal services and administration. These occupations are female dominated and have lower rates of pay in the UK compared with male-dominated occupations.

Women returned to part time work resulted from its flexibility of time that met women’s needs for family commitments, particularly childcare. Moreover, the female-dominated occupations tended to provide what women needed in terms of family-work balance. ‘In 2002, 43% of female employees were working part time compared with only 9 percent of male employees. Eighty-two percent of part time workers were females. In recent years many employers have introduced part-time, flexible work - but the opportunities for flexible work in professional or managerial work are very limited’ (EOC Flexible Working website).

Further, Tomlinson et al. (2005) stated that women’s involvement in a paid job may possibly relate to the level of educational qualification they received:

Women who gained a formal Level 2 (GCSE) and Level 3 (A-Level) equivalent qualification are far more likely to be in paid-employment, compared with women who have not achieved these levels of qualification (p. 5).

And,

A number of important female-dominated occupations (notably health and social work professionals) also had skills shortages’ (ibid).

It will not be surprising to know that males are still the dominant group in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) occupations nowadays. The reasons could go back to their earlier school stage where in the gender segregation in school subjects, boys were still
the majority among Sciences, Physics and Engineering, as mentioned earlier. Other interrelated factors that reduce the likelihood of women participating in SET occupations may include the inflexible working hours impeding women’s arrangements of childcare. These reasons may also reflect the barriers women have encountered in other occupations.

In addition, the earning gaps between the two genders have existed generally in British society regardless of qualifications. ‘Women's jobs often command lower wages than men’s work,’ leading to inequalities in pay and income’. (EOC, 2001a: 1). The good news is that earning gaps between males and females are intending to diminish, as a recent survey Key Indicators of Women’s Position in Britain 2002 showed:

The earnings gap in full-time work has reduced considerably in the last 30 years. In 1970 the ratio of women’s to men’s average earnings was 63 per cent. In 2004, this has increased to 82 per cent’ (Women and Equality Unit, 2004).

Younger women in the UK tend to be more dominant in their lives compared with their mother’s or grandmother’s generations. Despite women now gaining a more equal footing with men, they continue to have primary responsibilities in domestic duties and this has led to the continuing inequality in many families.

3.3.3 Gender Inequality in the Family

The transformation of family lives has brought more women into the labour market, the result of which has lifted women’s status in the family, and women are now keen to be independent economically. On the other hand, the transformation of family lives has helped women shift their expectations of life. ‘Sixty-seven percent of women between 16 and 64 are now in employment’ (EOC 2003: 1). ‘Since 1984, the employment of mothers who are married or in relationships has increased by a third’ (EOC, 2000b, 3). The changes of family values and lifestyle among women can also be found in figures concerning choices whether to have children and when. The introduction of contraception and the increased opportunities in education and labour market, led to women delaying having children: ‘the proportion of births to women in
their thirties more than doubled—from 20% in 1976 to 42% in 1998’ (Roberts, 2000: 1). In addition the change of family lives in the UK influenced the relationship between men and women. Women’s position has liberated itself from traditional family commitments. The division of labour between men and women has also changed while more female single parents are responsible for the family economy. A recent national survey conducted by the EOC showed:

Around 82% of girls and 64% of boys disagreed with the statement that 'A man's job is to earn money, and a woman's job is to look after the home and family (EOC, 2001b: 3).

Most children agreed with the statement that:

It is okay if the father stays home and looks after the children and the mother goes out to work (ibid).

However, Arnot et al. (1999) showed that gender segregation in the family was influenced by children’s class background as children from working class background tended to retain the stereotype of views. They indicated:

The changes of cultural norms toward family upon women were summed up for two possible reasons. Firstly girls perceive the need to be economically independent, especially if they cannot rely upon a man to support the family financially or be involved sufficiently in childcare. Secondly girls express the desire to achieve autonomy, to determine their own sexual preferences and partners rather assume traditional models of family life (p. 65).

In this context women’s attitudes toward family have been influenced by socio-economic background and cultural norms where they have been brought up. Although the gender gap has been much smaller in the past decades particularly in educational opportunities and the greater increases of women’s participation in the job market, the different kinds of discrimination still can be found in schools, access to job market and families. The changes of family structure, the ideology of women’s roles and women’s expectations for their future lives have made the border line vague between men and women in families. Ideologically, gender divisions in the household have diminished but in reality women still take the major
responsibility for childcare. Thus gender inequality in the family and in employment seems to still exist.

Linked with the discussion above, it is possible to describe the changes of barriers and opportunities at school as issues related to the changes of government legislation in which girls were given more opportunities in education. However, the gender orientation in subjects and boys' underachievement indicate the current concerns of schools; barriers in the job market can be regarded as issues derived from the men's and women's stereotypes toward employment, the different access of the two sexes into the job market and unequal pay. The changes of barriers and opportunities in the family as issues come from adult women returnees' family ideology and personal perception and expectation of the future.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has looked through the government legislative changes both in society and education in the UK since the 1940s. These changes have given more opportunities to adult students, especially adult women students to learn. Part One provided statistic findings cited from the latest 2006 Social Trends to show the changes upon women's lives since World War II. Part Two focused on the changes of barriers and opportunities for adult women returnees at school, in the job market and in the family. Gender inequality was fully discussed through the changes of government legislation and policies in relation to women's equality in education and paid work. Women became more active economically and less dependent on their male counterparts. The opportunities have been increased during the past decades, but the stereotypes about subjects at school, access to job market and the division in the family seem to remain the same. In other words, the changes of barriers and opportunities for adults returning to learn in the UK are based on the changes of individuals and family ideology at the micro level, and socio-economic and government policy progress at the macro level. This phenomenon, as discussed in this Chapter, has presented us with a complete picture from the historical and socio-economic context in British society.
Now I shall move on to the context in Taiwan where I aim to use both micro and macro levels in examining the changes of barriers and opportunities for women returnees in Taiwan since the 1940s.
Chapter Four:
The Changes in Women’s Lives and Educational Opportunities in Taiwan since the 1940s

4.1 Introduction

Over the last forty years, Taiwan, Republic of China, has undergone tremendous political, economic and social changes. Rapid post-war industrialization resulted in per capita income growing from US$186 in 1952 to US$12,884 in 2002 in Taiwan (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2002). There has been a dramatic rise in educational standards of the populations. The percentage of citizens completing university education increased from 1.4% in 1952 to 10.1% in 1994 (ibid). Taiwan has been incorporated into the world capitalist economy, affected by technological changes and assimilated into the global culture within which education operates. Women’s position in social and economic aspects has been improved; however, the Confucian cultural norm still poses certain challenges to the status of women’s role in the family in Taiwan. Hence this chapter will discuss the changes in women’s lives and gender inequality in Taiwan since the 1940s.

The chapter divides into three parts, and starts with a historical presentation. The contemporary history in Taiwan has its significant meanings in modern Chinese history since the society in Taiwan had experienced its political transition and transformation from an agricultural society to an industrialised one. Taiwan is regarded as a multi-cultural society consisting of different tribes and language groups. The diversity of ethnic groups has different characteristics and represents the uniqueness of people within the island. In this study, the women returnees to learning I met from Taiwan are Taiwan-born but with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Hence when I examine women returnees’ lives in Taiwan, I can hardly ignore the historical and social background where they have grown up. Then I turn to examine
the changes of adult women’s lives in Taiwan during the past decades particularly by looking at the women’s involvement in the labour market since the 1940s. This had played a significant role in the economic changes in Taiwan in the 1960s. However, career women in Taiwan are described as ‘candles burning at both ends’: mostly career women carry the responsibility of doing house chores and caring for young children and older people while having paid employment outside. The gender inequality seems to discriminate against females in the labour market and this will also be discussed from current women’s participation in the job market to state legislation. In addition, the drop in fertility and the introduction of family programmes are also brought into discussion. As women’s opportunities to gain education were influenced by the family norms in Taiwan, it will be necessary to look at the changes of such family norms during the last fifty years before looking at women’s opportunities to gain education. These changes of family norms have affected women’s involvement in the labour market, which is therefore, fully presented in this section.

Part two begins with the historical roots of education, then moves to examine the development of education in Taiwan. Such development has depended on its political background. The gender equality of education is not something new in Taiwan, as the government has been making great efforts to improve the educational system. Part three discusses barriers women in Taiwan have encountered and I divide these barriers into three categories: barriers from the Confucianism society (institutional barriers), barriers from the family ideology (situational barriers) and barriers from the job market (dispositional barriers). Full details will be presented later.
4.2 Part One: Social and Economic Trends after the Second World War: A Brief History of Taiwan Geographical Location and Colonial Background

Taiwan represents a unique geographical position and its diverse ethnicities and languages that constitute the uniqueness of its history. Fujian and Guangdong (provinces in China) are less than 200 km to the west of the Taiwan Strait, and for this reason, Han people from these provinces crossed the sea to Taiwan very early on, making up the main ethnic group of modern-day Taiwan society. Western power arrived in Taiwan when the Spanish and the Dutch came to Southeast Asia to extend their land for colonisation in the seventeenth century. Taiwan became a colony of Japan in 1895 and continued to be so until Japan’s defeat at the end of World War II. Taiwanese society experienced a number of changes during the Japanese period but had a primarily rural and agricultural population with limited educational attainment. The influences rooted during the Japanese colonisation upon the inhabitants and society of Taiwan have lasted until now both in landscape and ideology.

4.2.1 Diverse Ethnic Groups and Immigrants

Taiwan is a multi-ethnic country, normally classified into the four main categories of aboriginal people, Fukienese, Hakka, and mainlanders. Multi-ethnicity has become one of Taiwan's rich and varied cultures. It is therefore worth investigating and understanding the evolving history of relations between the ethnic groups and their identity. As mentioned earlier, Han people all immigrated to Taiwan from Mainland China, but immigration was divided into different stages. Han people came from different localities, they spoke different languages and practised different customs. They settled in different regions inland where some of the communities still kept their traditional customs, languages and ways of living but many have mixed with other communities, and the younger generations have moved out to
urban cities. Here I briefly introduce the diverse ethnic groups as those who inhabit this land, defined as the “original inhabitants” (Indigene), “early inhabitants” (Ben Sheng Ren), and “new inhabitants” (Wai Sheng Ren). In 1949, the KMT government of the Republic of China moved to Taiwan and proceeded to govern it, and around 1.5 million people followed the authority from different provinces in China, mainly from the professional (i.e. military, civil service or teaching) population. These immigrants and their offspring have long been referred to as “Mainlanders” (Wai Sheng Ren), literally, “post-Second World War immigrants and their offspring,” and they have had a very deep influence on politics and society in modern-day Taiwan. Later this phenomenon was considered to be one of the significant impacts in terms of ethnic-based inequality. “Ben Sheng Ren” (Taiwanese), literally “the native born and their descendants”, had very different dialogues, lifestyles, customs and political and social activities. Now after several decades of social interaction, intermarriage has produced countless numbers of children with both Ben Sheng Ren and Wai Sheng Ren parents. The notion that Mainlanders see Taiwanese as having more wealth and Taiwanese see Mainlanders as having more political power (Chang, 1994) may do not still exist decades later. The differences between diverse ethnicities still remain despite the assimilation undergone among inhabitants from Mainlander and Taiwanese origins in the past decades. In Taiwan, society has developed the special characteristics of an immigrant community, with its multiculturalism and diversified social backgrounds between the ethnic groups. Women in Taiwan, no matter which ethnic group they are from, have all been brought up in the Confucian society where family norms play an important role in their lives. Taiwan is one of the communities (apart from Hong Kong and Singapore) where traditional Chinese characters are used officially nationwide. Taiwan is also considered as the community where people have received strong impacts of Confucianism since 1947. Confucianism is not regarded as a religion in the view of local people but more as a philosophy that has been rooted in people’s ways of thinking and daily lives for thousands of years. Over time, the Confucian
patriarchal family has transformed its traditional values and cultures about men and women and their position in the society of Taiwan, but the patrilineal, hierarchical relations between the generations and the duties of filial piety still have a strong influence on every family inland even if diminished in the modernised Taiwan, on every family inland. I shall later extend the discussion of the changes of barriers and opportunities of women in Taiwan and the influences of the ideology of Confucianism.

Before moving to women's involvement in the labour market, I shall briefly look at the constitution of labour in Taiwan since the post-war period.

4.2.2 The Economic Development in Taiwan Since 1940s

During the twentieth century, Taiwan completed both its demographic transition and social transformation. The former involved the move from high to low levels of mortality and fertility and the latter transformed itself from a rural, agricultural society to one that is highly urbanized and industrial. As researchers found, 'this change was accompanied by a tenfold increase in per capita income, in constant dollars. Much of this transformation occurred in a period of no more than forty years from the late 1940s to the mid-1980s' (Hermalin, Liu and Freedom, 1994:49).

In the post-war period, the most significant remake was the land reform that changed the rural power structure by transferring authority from landlords to the individual farmer. In the 1950s, a sharp rise in agricultural production was made by the land reform and the US aid; the agricultural production was enough not only to supply domestic need but also for export. The great development in agriculture enhanced the power to become an industrialised society. While the agricultural production increased largely between 1952 and 1961, the government in Taiwan started to invest heavily in education and this helped accommodate the growing
number of schoolchildren and improve labour quality. However, the changes in agriculture and manufacturing did not immediately translate into major shifts in labour force trends. As expected, the distribution of employed persons by industry shifted from agriculture toward the industrial and service sectors; the changes were modest.

Taiwan transformed itself into an export economy during the 1960s. There was a transformation of labour-intensive employment due to the growth in export industries and manufacturing employment. Later, Taiwan’s economic expansion was interrupted in the 1970s by a series of economic problems, including international monetary disorders, two oil shocks, and a worldwide economic recession. The economic recession was followed by the first oil shock in 1973 although Taiwan was at that stage when there were great demands in export of labour-intensive industries. In addition, women seemed to be considered as the major labour suppliers of labour-intensive industries before transforming into skill based workers. From Table 4.1, we see the annual labour force dropped in agriculture between 1960 and 1990.

After the second oil crisis during the 1980s, the government in Taiwan started to invest largely from heavy industries toward more high-tech industries. Researchers reviewing the changes of industries also implied that ‘growing environmental concerns also played a role in redirecting efforts to technology-intensive industries rather than capital-intensive ones’ (Speare, Liu and Tsay, 1988:8). In addition, farming families would hardly maintain their income due to the increase in the use of farm machinery after the 60s. There was a need to earn extra money from non-farming jobs and the industries provided such needs for people from all levels.
Table 4.1 Summary of labour statistics, Taiwan, 1960-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labour Force Growth, 1960-1990(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of total labour force in manufacturing and services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labour productivity: Annual growth in GDP per worker, 1960-1990(%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labour Productivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These statistics are based on employment rather than on the labour force.

During the development of industrialisation in the 70s and 80s the female labour force played a significant role in terms of economic development. In the next section I shall look at women's involvement in the labour market since 1940s. Gender inequality will also be examined; sex segregation is still commonly seen in the job market in Taiwan. Later I will see how women's lives have been improved due to the involvement in economic and social development.
4.2.3 Changes of Opportunities in Women's Lives in Taiwan since 1940s

4.2.3.1 Women's Involvement in the Labour Market

During the early industrialisation, unmarried girls who had just graduated from junior high school were the main targets of factories. In 1970, 57% of vacant jobs in labour-intensive industries were specifically targeted at female labour (Huang, 1999:21). Huang further argued that women were favoured by the owners of industry due to geographical location, flexible timetable and women's nature as obedient workers:

The increase in female labour force participation from 35% in 1970 to 46% in 1988, provided a second source of labour for industrial expansion. Many young women who formerly had been unpaid family workers could now work for wages in nearby factories while still living at home or could work away from home, sometimes living in a facility provided by the enterprise. These factories preferred the obedience of young women. Low cost was the main reason why these unmarried young women were the preferred employees. Flexibility is another important reason. They usually quit their jobs after they were married so their employers could save the cost of pensions, redundancy payments and increased wages in line with their work experience (ibid).

In the post-1973 period Taiwan was shifting from labour-intensive to knowledge-intensive industries. This caused a slight decline among the female civilian labour force (see Table 4.2). It seemed more female labourers stayed in industries that helped the rapid growth in exports. The other reason was the increased opportunities in education. By 1968, secondary education, particularly the junior high schools, became solely academic because the shift to more technical industries require a longer period of academic training as the basis for more advanced vocational training. Educational opportunities for females have been sharply increased during the rapid expansion in secondary education. Details can be found in the educational section later on.
Table 4.2 Labour Force Participation Rates by Sex, Selected Years, 1949-88

Civilian Labour Force Participation Rate(a) % of total population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period I</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period II</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period III</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.3 shows sharp declines in self-employed workers and unpaid family workers, mostly women, over the period.
Table 4.3 Labour Force Participation Rates by Distribution of Employed Persons by Industry and Class of Worker, Selected Years, 1949-88

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period I</th>
<th>Self Employed</th>
<th>Unpaid Employed</th>
<th>Self Unpaid Family Workers</th>
<th>Paid Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to a recent review on women’s involvement in the labour market since the late 1970s in Taiwan, there were a set of interrelated factors as reported by Chiang (2000) ::
The strong demand of industrialisation for unskilled labour in the early development period; increases in urban tertiary employment; a rise in women's overall educational level; technological advances that simplified housework; and family planning which gives women the choice of fewer children and long working years (pp. 236-237).

However, some of the problems of female employment remain unresolved. Table 4.4 shows the increase in female labour force participation, from 37.07% in 1972 to 45.64% in 1997. This increase is considerably faster than their male counterparts. It also shows that there was a clear gender discrepancy in formal labour market participation. Chiang noted:

This disparity can be explained by the aspirations from women for higher education but it may also be due to the reluctance or inability of married women to gain employment, particularly in the formal labour market (ibid: 237).

Another recent study stressed the intention of married women with a dependent child to stay on in paid-employment. Farris (2004) found:

In the 1990s, in Taiwan, women's domain is not only in the home; women including married women with small children, are in the workforce in large numbers (45% of all women) (pp. 362).

Besides, the stereotype remained that men are still considered as the breadwinner of the household income while women's salaries are seen as supplemental ones. In other words, it draws out the fact that women in Taiwan tend to be in a low paid job or in an inflexible or insecure working environment such as nursery teachers, clerks, unskilled or semi-skilled factory workers, farmers, nurses or unpaid help in family businesses. Chou Bih-er (1994) has analysed the changing patterns of women's employment in Taiwan from 1966 to 1986. She indicates that women workers are well integrated horizontally into all areas of the economy, including manufacturing, commerce, and service industries.
Table 4.4 Labour force participation rates in Taiwan by sex (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>77.16</td>
<td>37.07</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>75.47</td>
<td>43.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>77.13</td>
<td>41.53</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>75.15</td>
<td>45.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>78.24</td>
<td>40.22</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>75.24</td>
<td>46.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>77.61</td>
<td>38.56</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>74.83</td>
<td>45.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>77.20</td>
<td>37.56</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>74.92</td>
<td>45.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>77.79</td>
<td>39.27</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>73.96</td>
<td>44.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>77.96</td>
<td>39.16</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>73.08</td>
<td>44.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>77.92</td>
<td>39.21</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>73.77</td>
<td>44.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>77.11</td>
<td>39.25</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>72.67</td>
<td>44.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>76.78</td>
<td>38.76</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>72.44</td>
<td>45.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>76.47</td>
<td>39.30</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>72.03</td>
<td>45.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>76.36</td>
<td>42.12</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>71.13</td>
<td>45.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>76.11</td>
<td>43.30</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>71.09</td>
<td>45.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women in Taiwan: linking economic prosperity and women’s progress, Lan-Hung Nora Chiang (2000)

Chou Bi-Her continued:

Although women workers have made significant gains in commerce and service industries at all levels, including employer class in commerce, the majority of women are still located in the lower end of the production relationship...Sex segregation at the level of ownership of the means of production remain the biggest obstacle in the way of gender equality’ (ibid: 352).
A recent report completed by the Foundation of Women’s Rights Promotion and Development (WRP which is translated from 婦女權益促進發展基金會, 2000) reinforced the evidence from Chou’s study and brought out more concerns about women’s welfare inland in a paid employment:

Although the number of women participating in the labour market began increasing during the past few years, their work burden also continued to grow as no relative reduction was effected on their uncompensated home and community responsibilities. ... Compared to the rest of the world, Taiwanese women mostly engage in non-standardized work such as temporary worker, part-time worker, take-home subcontract working, etc. Most of these jobs are underpaid, under-protected and have poor working conditions. These factors plus the scarce attention paid to the occupational health of women make it imperative to pay attention to the plight of women workers.


Women with a paid job also encountered problems such as the support of day-care for children and older people from the state and employers. Despite the Employment Service Act and Standard Labour Act, both legislations lack laws on gender equality, and WRP argues the inequality results from ideology and rules inside the society:

The internal rules and corporate culture of many companies still regard the male as the breadwinner; hence, they are given priority consideration in terms of career promotions. Women are placed in auxiliary positions that are easily replaceable and lack development chances. They are not included in the promotion channels of the company (ibid).

In addition, female labour forces are still regarded as supplemental household incomes, which makes the situation worse.
4.2.3.2 The Drop in Fertility Rate and Changes of Family Structure

In the meantime, society in Taiwan also changed dramatically. The birth rate declined from 0.466% in 1952 to 0.153% in 1994. Most married women do not have to spend many years bringing up children, and then have more time to arrange their own lives. In Southeast Asia, fertility levels have dropped by over half since the late 1950s, with most of the decline having taken place in the past twenty years. In Singapore and Thailand, fertility levels are well below replacement; in Indonesia and Vietnam levels are rapidly falling toward replacement (Eberstadt, 1999:33). A statistic about fertility rates in the USA, France, Singapore, Germany, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea shows that Taiwan had the total fertility rate of 1.33 children per woman which is lower than in other developed countries (see Graphic 4.1). In the year 1981 the fertility rate was 2.54 children per woman in Taiwan.

Graph 4.1 The fertility rates in the USA, France, Singapore, Germany, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea in 2002

The reasons for the remarkable decline in fertility include the delays in marriage, but the most important factors were the overwhelming acceptance of modern contraception among married women and having the need to earn due to the high standard of living. Prevalence rates for modern contraceptives in the mid-1990s went up to 74% in Taiwan. The rate of decline was
particularly marked from the mid-1960s, which coincides with the introduction of an intensive family programme, along with rapid socio-economic development. Feeney and Mason (2001) suggested that demographic change in East Asia was as dramatic as economic change. Of all the countries with a high fertility rate in 1960, in six women averaged two or fewer births by 1990: Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and China (p.5). The drop of fertility rate implies women are looking for meaningful social roles in addition to traditional roles as a mother and housewife. This is related to the previous discussion of women’s participation in the job market. The drop also reflects the new family structure which the nuclear family is replacing the traditional extended family in Taiwan. Although the nuclear family is commonly accepted by young couples in the urban areas, it is still different from the type of nuclear family that Westerners know. Chen (1994) explains the differences:

Rather it is the “new nuclear family”, which is still dominated by patrilocal principle. Daughters are still viewed as “marrying out” of their natal family; sons are responsible for parents in old age, and only sons expected to inherit” (pp.14-15).

Other scholars stated the type of family structure in Taiwan inclined to be closer to the husband’s parents due to the influences of the Confucian patrilocal principle:

Post-marital residence is often near the husband’s parents, and regardless age, the new couple often relies on his parents for economic support and childcare (Farris, 2004:359).

However, the situation somehow has changed possibly because women have become more independent and more dominant in their lives or the lack of childcare or other supports for married women in paid employment. Thus more and more women live close to their natal family or return to ask for support from their natal family with childcare rather than from the
husband's parents. Younger women nowadays tend to be economically independent and the number of children from their natal family is smaller. The family notion of son preference has changed greatly; on the contrary, daughters are considered to be closer to parents' needs than sons. Farris states 'various tensions within family are evident as women assume new roles in the large society' (ibid). In Farris's study many of the mothers with preschoolers would prefer to have their mothers rather than their mother-in-law serve as babysitters. It shows the tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is what women are concerned about and makes women’s lives even harder apart from other family commitments.

The changes of family structure also include the factor of rising divorce rates, single mother households and more females remaining single over the past decade in Taiwan. ‘After South Korea, Taiwan now has the highest divorce rate in Asia -- a sign that as more women enter the workforce, their roles and rights are changing’ (Mercury News, 2004). Women nowadays tend not to rely on their husband or regarding marriage as the guarantee for their future life. About 60,000 couples divorced in 2003, 6% more than the one in 2002. According to the government's Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (2003),

61 percent of those splits occurred after less than 10 years of marriage. The single mother as the house head increased 8.2 percent to 21.6 percent in 2000 compared with 13.4 percent in 1990.

However, the government supporting system for single parents is inadequate despite the increase of single parent households in the past decade. The rapid social changes have reflected the challenges women face in the society of Taiwan.

In the next section I shall continue on to look at the changes of family norms in which women gained more opportunities to study in higher education.
4.2.3.3 Changes of Family Norms for Higher Education in Taiwan since the 1940s

Taiwan now is an important international economic power with a rapidly expanding standard of living. At the same time, educational opportunities have also been expanded, creating a current generation of very well educated men and women. The opportunities for women to attend higher education in Taiwan have been increased year by year. Since Taiwan has become an industrial country, it has led to many family changes which were summarised into five phenomena by Thornton and Lin in their study “Social Change and the Family in Taiwan” (1994):

...social and economic changes like those experienced in Taiwan after 1950 would lead to many family changes,”
(1) A change from family-based social relationships to a life style with few obligatory family responsibilities and more allowance for individuals interests;
(2) A shift from extended to nuclear living arrangements and a contraction of kin networks;
(3) A shift from young and universal marriage with many persons remaining single;
(4) The transformation of marriage from an institution controlled by the older generation with little emphasis on sentiment to an arrangement among young people who regard inter-personal attraction as an important component; and
(5) The reduction of childbearing (p.2)

Among the statements some are also related to the social changes in terms of family structure that I have discussed previously. The opportunities for gaining education for daughters are now equal to those for sons in Chinese family in Taiwan. It has been mentioned that women’s position has been promoted not only in the labour market but also in the family in terms of equality. The greater educational opportunities should be regarded as one of the significant factors to enhance women’s power.

In the next section I move on to discuss the changes of educational opportunities for women in Taiwan.
4.3 Part Two: The Changes in Education in Taiwan

4.3.1 Under Japanese Occupation (1895-1945)

Taiwan society valued education highly even before the Japanese Occupation. During the Occupation, Taiwanese students were segregated from the Japanese students restricted to receiving an inferior quality education. The colonial Japanese government implemented the Japanese-Taiwanese “communal” education policy in which children were taught different curricula although they studied together. The educational opportunities for girls have increased since 1922, but girls did not gain equal footing with boys as female secondary schooling was one year less than that for males; female teacher training colleges and universities did not exist. Primary education rate was only 61% for girls, but 81% for males. In 1943 the situation changed after the establishment of the six-year compulsory school education system which aimed at extending primary level education. On the other hand, children of Taiwanese origins were restricted from receiving secondary and higher school education so that they would remain second-class citizens to the Japanese. Thus in 1943, the percentage of Japanese in primary schools was as high as 100%; and only 70% for the Taiwanese. Regarding university education, 1% of Japanese were enrolled, compared with only 0.03% of Taiwanese (Ministry of Education, 1998).

4.3.2 After the Japanese Occupation (1946-2000s)

After World War II, in 1949 the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan and took over the education system. The six-year primary education system had been enforced in 1943. In 1968 the government imposed a significant reform policy and extended compulsory education to
nine years to be in line with the increasing need for more human resources for the country's growing economy. In school year (SY) 2004 (September 2004 to June 2005), the total enrolment rate of the population aged six to twenty-one was 96.77 percent. Roughly 237 people out of every one thousand of the total population were attending some type of educational institution. As a result of universal education, literacy has achieved a high rate, with less than 2.84 percent of the population over 15 years old being illiterate at the end of 2004 (Taiwan Yearbook, 2004).

Between 1960 and 1970, the number of private junior colleges and vocational high schools in the private sector grew by leaps and bounds. In 1968, under the Ministry of Education, the Directory of Vocational Education was established, renamed Directory of Technical and Vocational Education in 1973. By the mid-1980s, the expansion of higher education began. In the school year of 1997, enrolment rates for primary school age children (aged 6-11) on average reached 98.62%, secondary school age (aged 12-14) 95.6%, aged 15-17, 81.74% and higher education (aged 18-21) 31.09% (See Table 4.5). The results also show that since 1991 the female overall enrolment rates are higher than male at every level of education. The statement from the "Overall Report on Educational Reform" (The Executive Yuan's Commission, 1996) indicates “the (educational reform) goal is to give equal emphasis on the ideals of providing education for all without discrimination and teaching students according to their ability”. With the benefit from the Education Reform, the gender gap between male and female enrolment decreased at every level of education since 1991, as shown in Table 4.5.
Table 4.5 School Enrolment Rates for People between Ages 16-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>Ages 6-11</th>
<th>Ages 12-14</th>
<th>Ages 15-17</th>
<th>Ages 18-21</th>
<th>Ages 6-21 (Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>97.54</td>
<td>97.49</td>
<td>97.59</td>
<td>77.33</td>
<td>81.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>97.59</td>
<td>97.54</td>
<td>97.64</td>
<td>84.41</td>
<td>85.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>96.97</td>
<td>96.96</td>
<td>96.97</td>
<td>89.02</td>
<td>89.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>98.70</td>
<td>98.75</td>
<td>98.64</td>
<td>91.70</td>
<td>91.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>98.62</td>
<td>98.66</td>
<td>98.69</td>
<td>95.60</td>
<td>95.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The educational system in Taiwan has grown rapidly since the 1950s, and opened the school-gate for women. In 1987, the percentage of female students was close to half of all students at primary and secondary levels (aged 6-14) (see Table 4.5). Since 1987 there have been more females than males at senior high school (aged 15-17). This was probably because the number of vocational schools increased dramatically due to the Higher Education Expansion in the 1980s, and more girls than boys tended to undertake vocational programmes instead of going into the mainstream university education. Girls are more likely to enrol in occupational senior high schools, which are considered to be the second choice for students graduating from junior high schools (see Table 4.6). As Table 4.6 also shows there is a tremendous increase of opportunities for female students in terms of education. It is similar to their English counterparts when barriers are lowered for women wishing to advance their education.
Table 4.6: The Percentage of Female Students at each Educational Level (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37.54</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high school</td>
<td>28.70</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high school</td>
<td>27.10</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational senior high school</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-year college</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master programme</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor programme</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Meanwhile, female university students are dominant in the humanities and liberal arts and in vocational schools and colleges or teachers' colleges. This leads to the phenomenon that while educational opportunities have improved rapidly, other social and cultural factors perpetuate differences in the type and quality of education received by men and women. Male oriented subjects such as Science and Engineering are dominated by males. Female undergraduate students are concentrated in the faculties of Arts (77.3%), Public Health (72.0%), Law (61.5%) and Management (53.8%)(see Table 4.7).
Table 4.7 Students of Faculties in National Taiwan University by sex, 1997 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculties</th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Eng.</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Taiwan University (1997:70-71)*

In sum, gender inequality still remained according to the above discussion and is reinforced by the government publication (Ministry of Education, MOE, 1998) which concludes:

1. A government statistics report has shown that the subject choices for college majors by female students are mainly concentrated in education, arts, humanities, home economics, tourism, and mass communications—areas traditionally dominated by women. The subjects of engineering, natural sciences, mathematics, computer science, transportation, electronic communications, architecture, urban design, and law, are still dominated by male students.
2. The ratio of female students to the total student population decreases at each higher level of university education.

3. Traditional stereotypes of females as inferior to or weaker than males frequently appear in all types of textbooks. Even in teacher-student interaction, studies have found teachers to be inclined to give more attention and learning opportunities to male students. Female students from the lower strata of society, or from indigenous families, also suffer a greater amount of unequal treatment at school. (MOE, 1998)

Although women have gained greater educational opportunities, as part of the process of modernization the social and juridical positions of women have been raised in Taiwan, gender bias still existed in school subjects and curricular materials. ‘A sex-based quota system is used and girls are disadvantaged here’ (Hsieh, 1997). I agree that it is difficult to eradicate the inequality in education if such gender segregation still remains in the labour market and family in Taiwan.

In the next section I shall discuss the changes of barriers as the results from Confucianism in the society and family of Taiwan.

4.4 Part Three: The Changes of Barriers resulted in Confucianism Ideology in the Society and Family of Taiwan

4.4.1 Barriers from the Confucianism Society

In Chinese history, men have controlled the power of the economy, law and religion for over 3,500 years; women never questioned this situation until the twentieth century. Family and marriage systems began to be challenged by intellectuals. According to Confucian teachings, the most important social institution is the family. Each person should fulfil his/her own role. In the home, the female role is to be an obedient daughter, faithful wife, devoted
daughter-in-law and self-sacrificing mother. Women are strongly discouraged from going outside the home. The ideology of Confucianism has cemented a patriarchal culture, which ensures men’s superiority inside and outside the family. In contrast, women are confined to subordinate roles and almost entirely excluded from the public sphere.

Under Confucianism, women have not been encouraged to study. It was a common belief that an uneducated woman has virtue. As a result of their lack of education, women were dominated by traditional norms and were unable to question their inferior situation. Chinese women are taught to obey and depend on men; they should obey their fathers in childhood, rely on their husbands after marriage, and depend on their sons after their husbands’ death. (This is a Chinese maxim. The ‘Three Rules of Obedience’ (originally adopted from Yi-Li which is translated from 儀禮, one of the important doctrines of the school of scholar which is translated from 儒家思想) is an important guide to women’s behaviour. In Chinese culture literati are the most respected persons. All parents want their children to study as much as they can, but boys are always the first to be educated when a family suffers privations. In the early stages of industrialisation, parents expected their daughters to help them earn money in order to support their sons in higher education. As families in Taiwan ceased to suffer from poverty, they began to wish to invest in their daughters, too. According to a survey in 1985, 93% of people opposed the notion that girls were not worth such an investment (Taiwan Provincial Government, 1985:86). Today, women in Taiwan have the same opportunity as men to participate in higher education, enabling them to find professional employment. Traditional family and gender ideologies have to change under these circumstances.
4.4.2 The Changes of Family Ideology

As mentioned above, the Chinese family has been dominated by Confucian ideology through its guiding principles of social relations and social behaviour, emphasis on status distinction (class, gender and age), obedience, family values, collectivism and mutual benefit. The western scholar Jayawardena interpreted this as ‘Confucian ideas... based on the principles of humanity and love. Confucianists want the family to be harmonious, the state to be well organised and the world to be at peace’ (1986:170). People and family in Taiwan may not have aware that they are following the principles of Confucianism. However, the principles have been rooted deeply in Taiwanese culture and people’s minds and have become part of the family ideology. As Chang (1976) in his early study discussed the influences made by Confucianism upon the family in Taiwan indicated:

1. The family is under paternal domination. The family follows the father’s name, and the father has superior power inside and outside the family.
2. Chinese people prefer the extended family, where more than two generations live together.
3. The family is an economic unit. Family members work together or independently to maintain the family economy.
4. Obedience is emphasised within the family. The younger members should respect their elders; children should take care of their parents.
5. Women’s status is inferior to men’s (pp. 41-42).

Basically, the Chinese family is dominated by the father/son axis and the relationship between parents and son is mutually beneficial. A son is able to inherit his parents’ wealth, but is responsible for their welfare in old age; married couples without sons will face financial problems in old age. Additionally, a son must continue to provide for his parents in the spirit world after their deaths. He is also obliged to see that another generation is born to carry on the duties after his own death. In contrast, in the old ways in Chinese society, parents are unable to derive benefit from their female offspring. A daughter is expected to belong to her
husband's family and serves the members of that family in the future. All these factors have resulted in the Chinese family assuming boy-preference. Women returnees in this study who left education early were affected by this Chinese family norm in their early age; however, women from the younger generation are much less restricted by the family norms in modern Taiwan.

4.4.3 Barriers from the Job Market

Similar to their middle class English counterparts, in the past, people believed that women from “good” families did not need to work; for women in Taiwan, in contrast to English middle class women, a job was for living instead of self-achievement. Today, more women are willing to work even if they do not need the income. According to Women Web (2005) ‘in 2004, the female labour force consisted of 4,270,000 people. This number is about 47.7% of the total female population aged 15 years in Taiwan’. Also among the Asian countries, the female labour forces are slightly lower than Japan (48.4%), South Korea (49.7%) and Hong Kong (51.6%) (see Table 4.8). Despite the increased number of female labour participation in the past decades in Taiwan, there is still a bigger gap compared with Singapore (54.2%), Britain (55.3%) and the USA (59.5%) (Table 4.8). The gender gap also occurred in payment and type of employment in the society of Taiwan. It is possible to interpret that although women have gained higher qualifications and a higher proportion of female force participate in job market, women are still responsible for most jobs inside the home. Also because of the Confucian ideology in which women were brought up, some of them regarded gaining paid employment as a “man’s job” and then decided not to get involved in paid employment, regardless of qualification or ability. In 2004, the average female salary in non-agricultural employment was 78% of their male counterparts (WomenWeb, 2005). Besides, the study
showed that segregation still remained in some female traditional jobs. ‘Women still consisted as the majority in administrative and service departments in which women occupied mainly subordinate positions compared with their male counterparts. Gender segregation obviously exists in the job market in Taiwan where the large number of female labour forces is hardly found in manual and professional jobs such as construction workers and managers’ (ibid).

Table 4.8 The Nine Countries Comparison of Female Labour Participation in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Female Labour Participation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Kong</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Executive Yuan, Statistics Bureau, 2004

Many women left their paid jobs after they married. This has become the unique phenomenon of women’s participation in the labour market in the world. In 2003, 54.72% of married women aged 16-64 left their paid jobs after marriage. The number of women leaving their paid jobs has been increasing in the past decade (ibid) (see Table 4.9). The reason could possibly be the requirement of employers or other family circumstances such as child caring.
In addition, educational attainment led women to want to work even if their families did not have any economic hardship (see Table 4.10). We do not have data that women at college level would be more likely to return to HE. In recent decades, the prevalence of better educational opportunities and the flourish of the tertiary sector gave rise to females’ higher social status (Lee and Sun, 1995). However, the participation of women’s labour forces and married women leaving a paid job cannot simply be regarded as gender inequality. Although the gender segregation does exist in the employers’ and family’s attitudes toward women’s paid work, some women still decided themselves to return home. This could be interpreted that women in Taiwan are more likely to be influenced by Confucian ideology of family relationships in which the mother’s duty is taking care of her husband and children; and if the
family economy allows women to stay at home which the husband still plays the role of main breadwinner.

### Table 4.10 The Willingness of Women to Work in Cases Where There Is No Economic Hardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Will</th>
<th>Will Not</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data: 1988, unit: %*

*Source: Taiwan Provincial Government (1989: Table 57).*

If women had pre-school children, they tended to work when they faced a shortage of money in the household, as shown in Table 4.11. Seventeen to eighteen per cent of couples still had highly traditional attitudes towards women’s employment, and considered that women with pre-school children should not go out to work, even if this meant economic hardship. Moreover, married women respect their husbands’ opinions towards their employment. If their husbands do not want them to work outside the family, usually they will accept their husbands’ opinions and stay at home. Only about one per cent of married women expressed a view that women with pre-school children should have absolute autonomy to decide whether they can work.
Table 4.11 Attitudes Towards the Employment of Women with Pre-school Children, Taiwan

Data: 1988, number of sample: 4491, unit: %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No need, even if they need money</th>
<th>Yes, if they need money</th>
<th>Yes, if the husband agrees</th>
<th>Yes, even if the husband does not agree</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed women</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their husbands</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-employed women</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their husbands</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Taiwan Provincial Government (1989:100-7)

The survey completed by WomenWeb also indicated that women tended to take the major responsibility for both child caring and housework in the family in Taiwan. In 2004, 75% of women took the responsibility of child caring and housework compared with only 31.3% of men involved in the same jobs (see Table 4.12). Compared with the results in year 2000, there is no significant difference in men’s involvement in child caring and housework: women still take the main responsibility of house chore and child caring in Taiwan, which the marital life of career women even harder.
Kao’s (1987) study investigating work patterns and childrearing found 39% of women agreed that women should interrupt jobs if they needed to raise children, while 40% thought that women should not interrupt their jobs for marriage or raising children. In Kao’s study it is not surprising to know women with higher educational attainment or who had professional or administrative jobs tended to have a more aggressive attitude towards their career. Research on the attitudes of female managers also found that they put the family in first place although they disagreed with traditional women’s roles and approved of their contributions to society (Adult Education Association, 1995: 239). Women’s own attitudes showed that working women should not deny their career achievement or should not reduce the opportunity for social contacts in order to raise children. The attitudes of women in Taiwan towards their family role and career role may be independent; however, for many of them their family role is still the first priority and they accept their subordinate status therein. On the other hand,
many women expressed a great desire to participate in the public sphere and display their ability in society.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has given broad views from the historical, social, economic and educational aspects to understand the changes of women's lives in Taiwan in the last five decades. There has been a significant improvement in the social and educational context which brought women in Taiwan more opportunities in terms of learning. However, dispositional barriers remained in many women's lives due to the Confucian ideology which influenced deeply many aspects of life in the family and society in Taiwan. Although gender gaps in education have sharply declined, institutional barriers still exist for female students in the subjects and type of schools and level of schools. We found women's lives in Taiwan have been changed dramatically because of the rapid economic development during the last few decades. It was different with their English counterparts. Situational barriers were loosened because of the economic changes in the early 60s and 70s which changed women's lives from an agricultural society to a technological one by centred environment. It showed us that the causes for the changes opportunities and barriers in women's lives in England may not be exactly the same as those in Taiwan. Some were similar, others were different. It will be fascinating to know both the similarities and differences in terms of changes of women's lives in both countries in order to bring us to the position to answer our main question “What are the opportunities and barriers and how have they changed for adult women returning to higher education in the UK and Taiwan?”

As this research uses the context of two different countries, the method of comparison is considered to be an ideal methodology approach to connect the wide discussion on the issue of women's life transformation in the two countries. A liberal feminism approach was
borrowed as the starting point. Its aim was to design a woman-centred and woman-friendly research environment not only for the researcher herself but also for all the women returnees who have been involved in this research. Details of these three approaches will be presented in the next chapter.
5.1 Introduction

This study is conducted in two countries with quite different ideologies, social and cultural backgrounds and family norms. The method of comparison is used between the two nations' identities in order to examine the issues of barriers and opportunities of adult women returning to HE in the UK and in Taiwan. In addition, Liberal, Radical and Marxist feminist theories are examined to gain a feminist perspective on the issues of adult women returning to education. However although these feminist theories are mainly taken from western studies due to the absence of Chinese feminist studies, the situation adopted here is that I examined women returnees from the view of being a woman from Taiwan rather than from a universal feminist view.

5.2 The Rationale for Using the Comparative Method

The Chinese proverb "Stones from other hills may serve to polish the jade of this one" applies to the idea of doing this comparative study although throughout the research process the examination of the changes in women's lives in both societies seems to be much more complex than I thought it would be. The adult returnees in this study comprise different age cohorts, different ethnic, cultural norms and social classes in higher education institutions both in the UK and Taiwan. Woman's lives in Taiwan may be similar to their English counterparts in some ways and different in other ways. The reasons for undertaking a comparative study are to understand and explain the experiences of women returnees from two different societies and cultural experiences. The stories women told me vary from country
to country, from institution to institution and from younger generations to older. Women’s lives have been changed during the last five decades and the opportunities and barriers on education, paid employment and gender inequality have been transformed through the years. How have such opportunities and barriers changed in the UK and Taiwan? The most significant contributions from this study are the comparisons between the two countries.

Women’s experiences are compared via education, family and working experiences and the changes of the barriers and opportunities of their returning to higher education in the past decades in the two societies are examined. I argue that women’s participation in higher education is heavily affected by their female roles in the societies where they have brought up. By analysing the changes of social structure, family ideology and gender inequality in education and work allowed me to find out the differences and similarities in the two societies. Due to the rapid changes made by information technology and together with the impact of globalisation, the differences lessened and the similarities became much more apparent in some aspects: for instance, there are more opportunities in education and the labour market for women but differences in cultural norms since women’s roles in Taiwan are affected by Confucianism. Meanwhile, what makes me interested in doing a comparative study is the process of bringing the changes of women’s lives from the past decades in the UK and Taiwan into discussion. Hence the rationale for this comparative study can, finally drawn from the idea to the introductory paragraph in the publicity for the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE) Conference:

In a world of growing uncertainty and continuing rapid change, interrelated developments in telecommunications, together with the impact of globalisation on labour markets, patterns of migration and cultural norms mean that basic assumptions about education are being challenged. New patterns of learning shaped by media that transcend national boundaries, and transformed by the demands of the market, call into question the structure of existing systems of the education and the content of national curricula. There is no longer any certainty about the place of national values, or state
control, in the development of education and training system as the competing interests of the market and civil society influence forms of provision and the process of learning. As the result there is renewed interest in comparative research across the social sciences and its implications for policy and practice in education in different parts of the world (Conference Publicity, BAICE Conference, 1998).

5.3 The Nature of Comparison

We are now in the twenty-first century where with mass communications and advances in technology the world is ‘getting smaller.’ In other words, we are now in a ‘global village’ society. The communication system enables people to contact people in other countries almost in an instant and advanced technology brings us up-to-date with events on the other side of the globe. This, of course, has an effect on the organisation of societies and people’s lives. Moreover, people’s lives act upon social, economical and political changes. May (1997: 185) characterises several benefits in undertaking comparative research. Broadly he refers to these as the import-mirror view, the difference view, the theory-development view, and finally, the prediction view. In May’s view these four characters are interrelated rather than isolated (ibid). Here I borrow his four views to apply in my own study which gives this comparative research the potential to enhance our understanding and explanation of “human relations”. By “human relations” I mean here the experiences of women returnees in both countries. I shall discuss each of these in turn. For import-mirror view, May (ibid.) indicates:

The project of comparative analysis is worthwhile because in producing findings on the practices of other countries, we are better able to see the basis of our own practices.

Conducting comparative research will allow us to examine different societies, and we can ask why some have developed in similar ways and others in diverse ways. Earlier Teune (1990)
pointed out, ‘Countries that are similar are more likely to borrow from one another’. May (1997) interprets this as ‘According to this view, the results generated by comparative study may permit the importation of different methods of organising a society’s affairs to improve their efficiency’ (p. 185). In other words, this adds to an understanding and explanation of the complicated relationship between economic, social and political systems. Also, ‘this can allow those who are studying other countries to have a particular insight into their practices’ (ibid). Thus, in this study, social trends and cultural background in two different societies enable me to consider the macro factors that influence social and political change and the micro factors peculiar to each social setting. May continues to say that:

Comparative analysis considers both endogenous and exogenous factors. The former are those which are peculiar to the country which is being studied, while the latter are those elements, such as gender and race relations, which while influencing that country’s social and political relations, are not simply peculiar to it (page 185).

But he warns comparative researchers to be aware of the “cultural specificities” by which people examine how exogenous factors affect the researched countries. Lastly, May extends his fourth view that the

Prediction of programme outcomes is enhanced through comparative work. According to this view, not only can the potential for the success of particular policies, systems or practice in a given society be understood, but also their outcomes can be predicted, once experiences of their effects in other societies and social and cultural contexts is examined (p 188).

The following section discusses the problems which have normally been found in comparative research.
5.4 Problems in Comparative Research

A number of problems have been raised in terms of the process of undertaking comparative research and in the potential for theoretical development. One primary problem is the ability of a researcher to generalise and explain social relations across societies and social contexts. May notices the problems from the perspectives he raised:

One of the primary problems with comparative analysis is not only the ability of researchers to understand adequately cultures and societies which are different from their own, but more specifically, to generalise and explain social relations across societies and social contexts (p.189).

To avoid such problems May adopted Winch’s (1990) idea who suggests:

We have to know the rules which are employed in that culture; only then can we understand the ways in which the culture views the social world.

Anderson, Hughes and Sharrock (1986: 184) extended Winch’s idea:

...In order to decide which institutions of one society- our own in many cases- to compare with those of another we shall need to be able to match those institutions, to say what kind of part they play in their respective societies...However, if we are in a position to say what part each institution plays in the life of its society then we have already achieved a very good understanding of it.

Also comparative researchers should be aware of the issue of comparing ‘like with like’ (see Teune, 1990). As May (1997) further explains, ‘the potential of comparative research in allowing the outsider to “look in” and see things in a different way which is theoretically useful (p189). Also, the comparative researchers should pay more attention to the social context in which not only the differences but also the similarities are found between societies.
This finds its outlet in discussions on appropriateness and equivalence in comparative research. A more general problem relates to appropriateness and equivalence. May notices:

The appropriateness refers to the methods employed and the conceptualisation of issues when undertaking comparative research. Researchers cannot assume that what is appropriate for their culture will necessarily be appropriate for another (p. 191).

However, issues of the meaning of equivalence still remain. For instance, different languages between the researcher and interviewees, as well as the translation of documents and a reliance on official publications, are still matters of interpretation. Due to such ambiguities, Lawrence (1979:10) recommends that:

...even if a researcher’s command of the language is not “perfect”, “misapprehension” can still be reduced by its use’.

Comparative research is clearly a two-edged sword, having both potential and problems. May worries that the above discussion could be combated by the effect of globalisation which results in more global forms of ethnocentrism. The world may move beyond the researcher’s shores, only to finish at the frontiers of “the west” (p. 193). Thus, an understanding of different social contexts and cultures and the various issues which form part of the actual process of comparative research is desirable but not always attainable.

As this study focuses on women returnees’ lives in two societies, it is not possible to use one theory to cover all issues. Therefore I examine the broad feminist theories to reflect some of the ideas applied in this research.

5.5 The Rationale of Feminism Methodology Approaches

Women returnees whom I met in this study told me stories that not only represent their own identity but also the whole picture of the society in which they have been brought up.
Women's lives are integrated with their culture and social movement. What I learned from each woman returnee is not purely a simple story of an ordinary person but more like a jigsaw puzzle to be put together with their own identity, cultural and social changes. I am concerned about women returnees in terms of the changes of barriers and opportunities experienced in returning to learn. Women are the centre of this research although the comparison of the changes of women's lives in two countries is the core theme. Jaggar and Rothenberg (1993: xvii) suggest that 'feminist theories ultimately are tools designed for a purpose- the purpose of understanding women’s subordination in order to end it'. However there are difficulties to cover all issues from one feminist theory and very few feminists can be assigned to a particular school of thought. The complexity of the feminism schools from the past to the future also made the definition of boundaries among feminism too vague. Feminist theories are mainly interpreted by western views; indeed the type of theory which is suitable to interpret women’s lives in Taiwan is lacking. It seems that women in Taiwan have been influenced by western feminism since Taiwan turned in to an industrialised country where the phenomenon of “Americanised” is often seen, in the past four, five decades. But women’s lives in Taiwan have received strong impacts from Confucianism and other religions such as Buddhism or Daoism. Western feminisms then would possibly be able to interpret women’s lives in Taiwan. However, that can hardly explain the whole story of women in Taiwan since the ideology is mixed with Confucianism and other religions that have stronger impacts on women and their lives. On the other hand, it cannot completely reject the idea that western feminisms have not been significant for women in Taiwan due to the society having been industrialised; furthermore people studied abroad some of whom returned and became the core part of the women’s movement inland. Hence the situation in Taiwan could be an example of Bryson’s (1999: 6) view:

It is recognised that women’s movements in other parts of the world have never been simply a response to western feminist agendas. Rather, they have their own specific
causes and independent histories; increasingly, they are also having an impact upon the perceptions and priorities of feminists in the west.

In the next section, I shall examine the theories of Liberal, Marxist, and Radical feminisms and the interrelated arguments about women’s experiences in terms of gender inequality, patriarchy and power.

5.5.1 Liberal Feminism

The main views from liberal feminists are the equality between men and women. Back to the 18th century, the liberal feminist Mary Astell (1666-1731) (cited in Valerie Bryson, 1999: 10) argued that:

Women’s ability to reason mean that they were of as much human worth as men, that they should be educated equally and that they should be enabled to live independently if they wished, rather than being forced by economic necessity to become the property of a man through marriage.

The idea of equality between women and men entitled them to have the ‘same rights in education, employment, property and the protection from the civil law’ (ibid). Later on, the liberal feminists in the second half of the twentieth century extend the ideas to men who would also benefit from ‘living in a sexually egalitarian society’ (ibid). Apparently, the liberal perspectives have strong ideas of “autonomy” and “self-determination”. However, some argue (e.g. Imelda Whelehan), liberal feminism does not identify the relations between men and women as specific power relations although they recognise women are discriminated against because of their gender. Imelda Whelehan (1995: 27) argues liberal feminists ‘tend not to identify their position as “political” but rather as a sensible, moderate and reasonable claim for formal sexual equality’. Furthermore, she compared it with Marxist and radical feminism: ‘by contrast, Marxist and radical feminism pay their attention directly into power relations
within the sexual politics’ (ibid).

5.5.2 Marxist Feminism

The idea of Marxist feminism was originally adopted from the theory of Marx which against the capitalist societies. According to Marx, men and women are shaped by class relations. Therefore Marxist feminists regard gender oppression as class oppression and the idea of women being inferior to men is seen as a form of class oppression. Bryson (1999: 20) suggests that ‘by the 1960s there was a general consensus that women’s domestic labour does not simply represent a personal service to individual men, but is of critical importance to the capital society’. Later scholars review the issues of women’s paid and unpaid work and further indicate that women are inferior to men outside and inside the home and the issues should be related to men’s power which has been the mainstream, and this has resulted in capital societies. Stewart (2003) says:

Western society rewards working men because they produce tangible, tradable goods. Women’s work in the domestic sphere is not valued by western society because women do not produce a tangible, tradable good. This gives men power and control over women.

The above ideas were initially taken from Marxist economic concepts to discuss women’s work in the home and in paid employment, and these issues are extended to the argument between gender and class. Meanwhile there have being many complex feminist debates about gender and class in the past decades. For example, some argue women used to (or perhaps still do under some circumstances now) derive their class position from their father or husband, instead of in their own right. Others ask where is the women’s class? Does it exist or not? Bryson (1999) suggests such idea makes the gender inequality even worse:

As feminists have argued, this assumption makes women’s own subjective experiences invisible, and ignores the unequal distribution of economic resources within the family.
In fact, a similar ideology has appeared in Confucianism in which women are taught to obey their father, husband once they are married, and son after the husband’s death. Women are completely invisible beyond such ideology. Women’s subjective experiences were also invisible in the family and in society. (see also Chapter Four).

5.5.3 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is the most diverse version of feminism. Radical feminists emphasise the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women which was first systematically discussed by Kate Millett in Sexual Politics in 1970. The term of “patriarchy” is now widely used by feminists ‘as a shorthand for a social system based on male domination and female subordination’ as Bryson (1999:27) demonstrates in her book. According to Millett, the inequality should not be regarded as women’s problem in everyday life but as a “political” issue. The rise of the key slogan “the personal is political” represents the core theme of radical feminism in terms of power and patriarchy. Bryson cited the argument from Millett about men’s power over women’s one as something political:

In all known societies, the relationship between the sexes has been based on men’s power over women; it is therefore political. Men’s power goes deeper than the power based on class or race, and it is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears “natural” and until named by feminists, invisible. It is maintained by a process of socialisation which begins in the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion; it also rests upon economic exploitation, state power and ultimately, force (ibid).
However, different perspectives arise from the radical feminism approaches by other feminists, such as Bryson (1999) who demonstrates four points lucidly of which ‘firstly the slogan “personal is political” implies that no area of life can be free from political scrutiny’ (pp 28-29). Then he stated the idea that “political is personal” in which ‘the insistence of personal is political is effectively de-politicising, as it can suggest that conventional political activity by feminists represents a futile engagement with man-made structure, and is therefore a waste of time’ (ibid). Thirdly, he feels that ‘the concept of patriarchy ignores oppression based upon race and class’ (ibid). Lastly, Bryson argued that radical feminist approaches are biased towards women’s negative experiences caused by men and have created the role of women as victims: ’the radical feminist approaches that encourage women to identify only with their bad experiences with men, produces a view of women as helpless victims, rather than celebrating their collective resistance and potential power’ (ibid). Therefore, the population at large views feminism as something complaining, whining, and a negative creed.

In addition, there is a risk for radical feminists who regard women’s status as victims and view the status as politically separated from men as it is divided into essentially good and bad. Critics say that this ignores the fact that many women do have a significant amount of political and economic power and that many men are oppressed. Radical feminism tends to also ignore a great number of aggressive women and caring men found in society and treats men as “the enemy”. Many feminists argue that many men as trusted fathers, friends, partners and political allies have done wonderful jobs for the feminist cause and many have treated the women in their lives with plenty of love and respect.

Next I move on to a discussion about how have the theories are interrelated in the issues of women’s lives in terms of gender inequality, patriarchy and power.
5.5.4 Feminist Debates on Women’s Lives

Liberal feminism suggests women should be liberated from domesticity and this helps women to work outside the home. However, many women may not feel liberated while their lives are filled with keeping house, caring for other family member and having a paid job outside the home. Many choose to stay at home with their children, implying that bringing up children is not a ‘proper’ job. In the 1990s Maureen Freely (1996) claimed that feminism had failed mothers by devaluing motherhood and treating children simply as an obstacle to fulfilment. Bryson (1999) demonstrates this notion comes originally from liberal feminism which ‘has failed to see the extent and social importance of the work done by women within the home, or to consider the consequences if women are no longer available to do it’ (p. 126). Unlike liberal feminists, Marxists attempted to understand the impacts on economics made by women’s domestic and caring labour and how these factors have been interconnected, although men and capitalism may have benefited when conflicts occurred. Bryson suggests that family is part of society in terms of its material basis. How the work is organised outside the home is as important as what happens inside. By contrast, for radical feminists, Bryson (ibid) illustrates it is the “starting-point” and that they insist that ‘personal relationships within the home are not simply matters of individual choice, but both reflect and maintain men’s patriarchal power’ (p. 127). Bryson connects such notions to men’s patriarchal power because ‘by restricting their (women’s) prospects on employment (they) help maintain women’s financial dependency’ (ibid). Other radical feminists, for example Firestone (1979), argued ‘women’s oppression cannot be ended while the institution itself remains, and that even the best marriage represents a form of domination disguised by love’. This idea would certainly be rejected by women who enjoy their role as wives and mothers and who find fulfilment through these roles, Bryson argues.

Alison Jaggar (1983), who is regarded as a socialist feminist, argues ‘when women workers
achieve a living wage, they are not just workers winning a concession from capitalism, they
are also women winning economic independence from men’ (p. 323). Feminists widely
accepted that the dependency resulted in women’s earning cannot provide them economic
independent reduces the “negotiating power” with men within the family.

In previous sections discussed the different views from liberal, Marxist and radical feminism
approaches to women’s inequality in work, the ideal of patriarchy and men’s power over
women. Adult women returnees whose barriers found in this study are closely related to the
inequality between the two genders that is resulted in women’s traditional roles in the society
and the types of family where they were brought up. Also men’s power seems to remain or
higher than women’s one particularly in opportunity of jobs and this causes the barriers of
adult women participating in a learning activity in the two societies. Liberal, Marx, and
radical feminism have addressed on issues with volumes, what I am interested in addressing
here are women’s issues upon gender equality and men’s power in the two societies.

Throughout the discussion of the three schools, I have tried to provide a solid theoretical
views upon feminist views upon women’s inequality and men’s power in the family and
society. Now I move on to extend the idea of researching women’s experiences to a
discussion particularly of my intentions and concerns.

5.6 Women’s Experiences: Intention and Concerns

In this study I examined women returnees from different age groups, class and ethnicity.
There is an attempt to accommodate the issues of ‘differences’ by looking at women’s
experiences. However, researchers argue by simply examining people’s differences such as
class difference, gender difference, age difference in the research process, as ‘there is a danger
of ignoring the differential power relations within these categories and between individuals
and society’ (Maynard, 1994). By the same argument Gorelick (1991) suggests that ‘the
researcher has a responsibility to do more than simply revoice the voice of those on the margins'. Women’s experiences are valued, but without looking at their historical context the research lacks validity. As Skeggs (1997) argues on behalf of women:

Women’s experience carries with it special knowledge and this knowledge is necessary to challenge oppression. It is because women are placed in a position to struggle against the force and powers that oppress that experience provides them with different understandings and knowledge (p. 54).

My concern is not simply to investigate women’s experiences but how to value women’s experiences as a theme by examining the social changes occurring in the two nations in the past decades. Although someone may say the broad social structure has changed women’s experiences, I would be happier to state that it should be the other way round.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the theories used in this research. Comparative study is used to view ‘human relations’ under the idea of global village. I would like to discover the similarities and differences in the countries researched. Despite the difficulty of comparing the two countries from every aspect, I am seeking to find out what ideas one could learn from the other. In addition, feminism approaches here are considered as a female lens to identify women’s lives. Although the three schools have agreements and disagreements with one another, I borrow their ideas, and this enables me to hold a brief discussion on women’s issues from broadly feminism points of views. As mentioned earlier, the barriers and opportunities of adult women returnees encountered in this study seem to closely relate to gender inequality in the family and society where women were brought up despite the progress of social
movements. Feminist theories, therefore, provide me a place of a theoretical discussion on the one hand. On the other hand, women’s experiences in terms of class, gender, and age are discussed since I do not simply regard woman’s life as a story but the types of issues that could cause by the entirety society.

In this study I am interested in finding answers to the following questions:

1. What are the opportunities and barriers and how have they changed for adult women returning to higher education in the UK and Taiwan?

2. How far have the barriers and opportunities for women returning to higher education been caused by social and gender factors?

3. Do younger women returnees have more opportunities and lower barriers than their older counterparts when returning to higher education?
Chapter Six
Research Methods

6.1 Introduction

The central framework for this study is provided by an examination of women's life experiences as an approach to understanding the barriers and opportunities of adult returnees in higher education institutions in the UK and Taiwan. In order to gain a complete picture, I felt it was necessary to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This chapter consists of two parts: firstly I justify the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In the second part, I shall describe precisely how and what I did. At the end of the chapter, I list my research questions in order and outline the structure for how I am going to analyse the data in subsequent few chapters.

6.2 PART ONE: Justifying the Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

This study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaires were given out to adult returnees, followed up by an in-depth interview to gain an understanding of their barriers and opportunities. As two data-collection methods (questionnaires and interviews) were used, triangulation was strengthened. Triangulation is the combination of several data-collection strategies or data sources in the same design. Jick (1979: 604) indicates 'the effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weakness in each single method will be compensated for by the counter-balancing strengths of another'.

'The advantages of a combined approach are that, firstly, it increases comprehensiveness and secondly, it allows for cross-validation of findings' (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984).
Manson (1993) has argued that 'data from combined methodology can be contradictory and their analysis problematic'. However, he suggests that analysis needs to incorporate the notion that the data which people provide are situated in the context of the diverse methods used.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods of research also calls into question which should take precedence in a research study. In this study I decided to rely more on a qualitative approach than on a quantitative one because the issues of barriers and opportunities on returning to HE are related to women's life stories. Duffy (1985) suggests that 'quantitative techniques are the most appropriate source for corroborating findings initially derived from qualitative methods and qualitative methods, are best used to provide richness or detail to quantitative ones when clarifying the direction of inquiry'. The intention and the purposes of doing qualitative and quantitative methods are different. However neither is superior to the other. Both have recognised strengths and weaknesses and are used ideally in combination. Overall, the main goal in using these two different methods was to increase the validity of the findings.

6.2.1 Discussion of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Reasons and Design

In this study, first a survey was undertaken to draw a general personal background from adult returnees at universities in order to look at their barriers and opportunities. Questions from surveys were divided into three groups: adult returnees' learning experiences in the past and present; reasons for coming to learn in HE, and their life transformation since they returned to HE. An in-depth interview was conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of barriers and opportunities which adult returnees from the two countries encountered. The questionnaire (See Appendix 2) consisted of 26 questions of which two are open-ended. The others were presented in Yes/No answers and multiple choices. A simple
numerical analysis was applied to the quantitative responses which I decided to break down into three age cohorts in each country. This decision was made in order to classify adult participants into young adults, middle aged adults and older ones then to compare the similarities and differences within the generations and across the nations. The quantitative data will be presented in Chapter Seven. The structure of the qualitative data analysis will be discussed in the latter part of this Chapter. A pilot study was carried out before the main study in both countries. Two staff members were selected from two institutions in each country to participate in the survey and interviews. The responses were carefully examined by my supervisors and other staff from the field before I started the main research. I used the same questionnaires in my main study.

As mentioned above, the main intention in doing this research was to gain more understanding from the changes of barriers and opportunities of adult women returning to higher education and it might be argued that there is no single best method of doing that. Methods also have to be feasible in terms of time, cost, resources, and within the various parameters of particular research contexts. As to what type of research method was to be used in this study, this depended on the data sought. There are likely to be many influences on, and experiences and relationships by any adult returnees which have led to their developing a particular philosophy of education and taking on a specific identity which informs their private or public lives. This is because there are various social contexts and conditions within which adult students return to university which have a further effect upon what they do and how they do it.

6.2.2 The Rationale of Undertaking the Surveys

Survey research is ‘the most frequently used research method’ (Fogelman, 2005: 93), often applied in data collection in the social sciences. This common perception is based on the fact
that almost everyone has been surveyed at some time, by telephone, or mail questionnaire at home or at work. Surveys are not only a common research tool, but also part of our daily life experience. In most cases they are used as the only method of data collection but they could also be used in addition to other methods. In either case they are administered to the respondents by mail or personally by the researcher. It is somehow difficult to gain a straightforward definition of surveys since 'a great variety in the research activities is being carried out under the heading of "survey"' (ibid). Cohen et al. (2000) wrote:

Typically, surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standard against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (p. 169).

Surveys collect the type of data offered by the respondents with a specific target or themes, they collect the types of information provided by respondents which could be categorised into facts and opinions. In this study adult woman returnees provide their life experiences as the factual information, and their opinions upon different issues are also included in the surveys. The former does not require much information in the way of personal perspectives on respondents but reveal information such as age, gender, marital status and number of children. The latter includes attitudes, views and preferences and so on in a way that calls for a judgement about things rather than reporting information. Hence surveys are used in this research to investigate the differences and similarities of the women’s lives and obtain the factual information about the age and gender of the respondents.

6.2.3 The Rationale of Undertaking the Interviews

In-depth interviews are used to collect women’s experiences from the past until now. This
helps me to receive a deep knowledge and understanding of women's life experiences. ‘Interviews are still a fruitful source of information when handled skilfully, either as the sole means of enquiry, or in conjunction with observations, diary analysis, or questionnaires’ (Wragg, 2005: 144) The aim of interviewing women returnees in this study was to find out those things I cannot directly observe or receive from surveys. Women's feelings, thoughts, attitudes and intentions cannot be shown by the degree of scale, nor by observing behaviour that took place at some previous point in time. Through the process of interviewing women may start to recall what happened in their early years of life. ‘The purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondents’ talk’ (Warren, 2002:83). Some researchers, including myself, try to understand the meaning of respondents’ experiences. Thus, the purpose of using interviewing in this study is to find out what is in adult returnees' minds. The talk becomes the genuine reflection of adult returnees’ thoughts on their life related to the barriers and opportunities returning to higher education.

6.3 The Qualitative Interviewing Process

For this study, I sent out a list of questions to which replies usually appeared directly or took a couple of weeks to arrive. I would then start the interview with further questions where necessary or desirable. Adult students showed their willingness to express their ideas until every doubt had been cleared up. The staff helped me find a quieter classroom to process the interviews. I used tape transcriptions. Data from the tape-recorded interview were stored as confidential files and are only used for the themes related to this study. Initially the interviews in this study were designed as traditional face-to-face (FTF) interviews, but due to time and geographical circumstances three interviewees were conducted via e-mails. Unlike FTF interviews, email involves sequential exchanges over an extended time period. The strength
and weakness of conducting an e-mail in-depth interview will be examined in the next section. The interviewees also agreed that it would be an approachable method for them to get involved in this study. Therefore a full-list of the interview schedule was sent out by e-mail to the interviewees, they sent back the text files which followed the sequences of the interview schedule. Afterwards, some follow-up e-mails were sent to the interviewees to clarify the points of which I wanted to gain in deeper knowledge from them. Email interviews were only applied as the method where the FTF interviews were not possible.

6.3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Conducting an Internet In-depth Interview

Regarding Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), researchers have different views. Cohen (1996) stated that CMC is a practical and cost-effective way of conducting in-depth interviews with individuals or groups who are geographically distant. For instance, ‘interview data can be moved directly into qualitative or quantitative analysis software packages’(Fielding and Lee, 1998) that might themselves interconnect. In addition, interviewing helped women’s voices to be heard; however, there may have been some unease between the researcher and interviewee when first meeting for the interview. Marilyn Smith-Stoner and Todd Weber (2000), who report having had successful rapport with their interviewees, point out that ‘the women they interviewed were very enthusiastic about the research topic: it did not “require any selling at all.” Not only did these women want to tell their stories, they expressed deep satisfaction with the process and were grateful to be able to do in online.’ Lastly, the traditional interview has to make a rapid selection of words used on sensitive issues. But ‘email allows more time for interviewers to choose their words in one-to-one or asynchronous group interaction’ (Mann and Stewart, 2002: 618). The weakness of e-mail interviews would be the ‘attentive pause to listen’ that is considered a ‘luxury in
some CMC contexts’ (ibid). Besides, ‘email interview may express listening by words’ (ibid) but can hardly achieve the type of status that the interview does, as ‘an interviewer may express listening with interest by responding promptly to questions, overtly expressing interest in particular points made, asking follow up questions, or perhaps enthusiastically sharing similar experiences to that described by the interviewee’ (Hodkinson, 2000). Thus, CMC is said by some to have narrow or lean bandwidth, in contrast to the “rich” bandwidth of FTF interaction (Sala, 1998).

Being a woman researcher in a women-centred study, my own identity as a woman, foreigner and researcher has been shifting between insider and outsider. This is discussed in the next section.

6.3.1 Insider or Outsider?

As Silverman notes, for interviewers in the interaction tradition, interview subjects construct not just narratives, but social worlds. For researchers in this tradition, ‘the primary issue is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people’s experiences’ (Silverman, 2001:87). Adult women returnees in this study are from different institutions in the UK and Taiwan, and the information they provided during the interviews could not simply be regarded as the authentic voices of the entire group of adult women returnees due to the limited number of participants in this research. However, the interviews provided me with the opportunities to acknowledge their experiences and opinions as returnees to higher education at this life stage in order to indicate the changes of life in the past five decades in both countries. By doing so, “inter-subjective depth” and “deep mutual understanding” can be achieved which further helps the attainment of knowledge of the social world. There has been a concern about whether e-mail interviewing would be able to obtain “thick description” or “account of
subjective experiences". As I tried to achieve these points also through FCF interviews, a follow-up email could be useful to clarify issues which I might have misunderstood or would like to probe further. Also, I tagged a line to the end of the message- ‘please let me know if there is anything else you would like to talk about’ and it seemed to be helpful to open up the conversation box and continue the discussion from both sides. All three e-mail interviewees seemed to be willing to respond the follow-up questions with regard to contents and time.

In my own research experience, I have often been aware of my own identity as a young, single, and non-white woman from Taiwan. So far, women interviewees from an English cultural background have begun to talk about key areas of their lives in ways which denote a high level of trust in me, and indicate that they expect me to understand what they mean not simply because I am another woman but because will share the interests and concepts of modern women. Consequently I cannot be totally an insider/outside in this research since the only reason for becoming automatically an insider to both groups is because I am a woman. Moreover, from a feminist point of view, that is the reason to make me an insider. To adult women returnees in Taiwan, I am an insider because of my Chinese ethnic identity, but I am also the outsider due to my role as a researcher who is studying at an English University. Thus, what may be seen as insider role to westerners is actually as outsider because I am not English. The difference between what I am and what I am perceived to be become two significant points in terms of my role as an insider and outsider in this study. In comparative studies, 'outsider versus insider' is always a big issue. Because I have lived in the UK as a woman from Taiwan, I am an insider to both groups of interviewees because I know the cultures of both countries. Because I am a researcher my life experiences are different from adult participants in this study such as age, class and ethnicity. Bearing this dichotomy in mind, I know who I am; my research background allows me to know what I meant to both groups as an insider.

Mechthild Hart (1998) has used standpoint theory to consider the position of what she
terms "insider-outsider": those who seek to cross boundaries between different worlds and knowledge. West (1996) illustrates that standpoint theorists argue that we need to see the world from diverse perspectives, across groups and within individual selves. This is not simply a matter of accumulating different knowledge, from different standpoints, and composing a more diverse mosaic. The process is more painful because of a complex power relationship between different identities and knowledge. Moreover, he continued, there is often a hierarchical relationship between what is culturally “inside” and what is “other”, what is acceptable and what is debatable. Women’s experiences reflected the type of social groups they belong to and the historical changes both in one’s own life and in the outside world. Here then the focus may be on the researcher’s own “insider” life but it is connected through social process to an “outsider” world of wider social change. As Merton (1988: 19-20) says 'full fledged sociological auto-biographers relate their intellectual development both to changing social and cognitive micro-environments close at hand and to the encompassing macro-environments provided by the larger society and culture'.

Silverman (2004: 131) indicated some scholars have argued that researchers should be members of the groups they study, in order to have the subjective knowledge necessary to truly understand their life experiences. In this study my identity as a woman provided me with an entry into the interview situation. This obviously was true for me in a rather special way in my study of adult women students since I am myself a young adult student at University. But that does not mean that my life circumstances as an interviewer are exactly the same as my interviewees, with whom I may conduct successful interviews. However, I tried to be prepared to expose myself to being placed as a woman more like the women returnees in this study and to establish that they were willing to be treated accordingly.
6.3.2 Feminist Approach Interviewing

Feminism approach interviews are conducted in this research because it studies women. I tend to find access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. Thus the feminist approach to interview is particularly useful for the study of women because that way I learn about women’s ideas altogether and allow women and even men to speak for women. Some feminist researchers have gone to great lengths in this regard by carefully recording and analysing women’s speech (Bell 1988; Riessman, 1990). Another example, Mary Belenky (1988) and her colleagues studied women’s ways of knowing with an “intensive interview/ case study approach.” Although they included a group of questions to test previous research, the rest of the questions were open-ended because the researchers wanted to hear what women had to say in their own terms rather than test their own preconceived hypotheses. Bearing Belenky and her colleagues’ experiences in mind, I tried to proceed inductively, and opening my ears to the voices and perspectives of women returnees so that I might begin to hear the unheard and unimagined.

Before the study was conducted, before I became an interviewer I had read what the textbooks said interviewing ought to be. However, I found it very difficult to realise the textbook prescription for the code of ethics in practice with regard to interviewing women. Firstly, I did not regard women as a source of data nor did I examine them from a purely experimental attitude. Secondly, I regarded this research as an essential way of giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility. Interviewing women was, then, a strategy for recording and documenting women’s own accounts of their lives. ‘What is important was not taken-for-granted research assumptions about the role of the interviewer but a new awareness of the interviewer as an instrument for promoting a sociology for women’ (Smith, 1987). That is, making women’s voices heard as a tool to try to articulate and record commentary of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal, rather, a capitalist
society. In fact, the formulation of women's role changes dramatically and this can be distinguished from being a data-collecting instrument for researchers to being a data-collecting instrument with those whose lives are being researched. Furthermore, such a reformulation would be enhanced where the interviewer is also the researcher.

A study built on the experiences of individuals raises the question of whose voice we are listening to (Thompson, 1978). What the researchers have learned would be the type of voices from individual women which may illustrate the reality from more angles and more authentically.

6.3.3 Learning to Talk from Women's Standpoint

My understanding of what it means to talk or listen “as a woman” is based on the concept of “women’s standpoint” (Hartsock 1981; Smith 1987); the approach does not imply that all women share a single position or perspective, but rather insists on the importance of following the implications of women’s (and others’) various locations in socially organized activities (see also De Vault 1990). In this study, I used qualitative techniques including open-ended interviewing; and I talked to women in higher education institutions about their lives in the past and present before coming to study at universities, the barriers and opportunities which they encountered before and during their studies at university which centrally defined their identities as an adult student at university and also as mother and housewife with other commitments in the family. To allow women to voice their thoughts in a comfortable way, I bore in mind the importance of being a good listener while the interviews were held. The idea of being a good listener would make the subjects feel that they are not just sources of data but that their views are valued.
6.3.4 Learning to Listen

‘Listening may be more valuable to the collection of data than the most carefully crafted questions. And, listening in active and different ways means hearing the words which are the infrastructure of an account (not merely answers to questions) and which reflect a woman’s effort to give an accurate portrayal of her experience’ (Kasper, 2003: 175). In this research, interviews are particularly valuable for uncovering women’s perspectives, especially as women’s interests and experiences are at variance compared with those of men. Hence, the moments when women are often mute in their own thoughts and feelings reflect the idea that women try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms of prevailing concepts and conversations. In order to hear women’s perspectives accurately, I read about their backgrounds and the social and historical context in which they have been brought up, so as to help me gain more knowledge about them. Then the silence in the middle of interviewing might possibly be tuning into a way of referring back to the moments where their stories were.

6.4 Part Two: Research Process in the UK and Taiwan

The processes of data collecting took place at different periods in HE institutes in England and Taiwan. In each country, there were three HE institutions involved in this study. The real names of the institutions have been replaced by pseudonyms - Bright, Miners’, and Daisy Universities in the UK and Jade, Phoenix and Pearl Universities in Taiwan— to protect the privacy of the Universities and respondents.
6.4.1 Profiles of Universities and Adult Returnees in the UK

6.4.1.1 "Bright University"

The University is located in South East England in a relatively wealthy area. It has a good reputation in many professional fields and received awards for many of its achievements. The University mainly targets traditional university students but in recent years it has started to recruit more adult students without any formal qualifications. Adult returnees I met from this University are primarily undertaking part-time BA/BSc courses through a Combined Studies Programme run by the Adult and Continuing Education Department. It is designed to meet the needs of adult students with widely different lifestyles. All carry credits which are recognised throughout the UK higher education system and may be offered for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) for those wishing to progress to a further academic degree. Combined Studies are including BA in Art, Art History and Literature, and BSc in Archaeology, Environment and Landscape; BA in English Local History, and a BSc in Counselling. These courses are taught on a modular basis that leads to a full degree. Part-time courses take six years to complete. The requirements for part-time adult returnees are more flexible than for their 18-21 year-olds and full-time returnee counterparts. Entry is through UCAS for 18-21 year-olds and full-time adult returnees. Part-time adult returnees may apply directly to the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. Adult returnees are not required to have any initial qualifications and are considered on an individual basis. Modules are offered on campus in addition to county locations. The design of this programme allows students who are interested in two or more fields to gain knowledge and skills and to develop the understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of topics. Adult students can gain a certificate towards future career development or academic study at a higher level. Most of these adult students are in their middle age; some are in their late 60s.
6.4.1.2 “Daisy University”

The University was one of the leaders in its field when the first polytechnics were started in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is located in a suburb of London with mainly immigrant and working class inhabitants. The University recruits quite a number of adult students who have been away from education for a while. As indicated in their brochure, in fact, ‘more and more of our students are in their 30s and 40s or older. We rate people’s life experience very highly, and often give academic credit rating for your previous qualifications and work experience before you even start on a course’ (Guide to Undergraduate Programmes, 2001-2002).

Adult returnees I met are from the School of Cultural and Innovation Studies that draws upon the Humanities and Social Sciences. They entered the University mainly through Access courses for which they enrolled in a number of local colleges nearby. These are special admission arrangements by which students from these courses can apply to University. Adult students can also benefit from their previous qualifications, recent study, work experience and particular skills or knowledge (APEL/APL) to gain a place at the University.

In addition, the University has a bilingual adviser for Asian Women, who offers individual appointments to advise on study opportunities at University or preparatory courses at local colleges. Apparently there is a demand from the minority group to study at University.

6.4.1.3 “Miners’ University”

Miners’ University specialises in innovative courses in design, music and the visual and performance arts. It is fully merged with a University that is one of the UK’s leading institutions for arts degrees. The University College is situated in an area of outstanding beauty in the north of England. Students I met are from the BA in Culture and Society course which is multidisciplinary, drawing on the complementary disciplines of Cultural Studies,
Sociology, Social History, Gender Studies, Ethnography, Film, Psychology and Politics. The normal entrance is through the traditional or equivalent academic qualification. However, it provides adult returnees with various routes to study at University. Most adult returnees enter through Access or Preparation for Vocational Higher Education (PVH). Returnees with previous relevant experience are particularly welcome.

6.4.2 Process of My Research in the UK

The first stage of fieldwork in England was carried out between May and October 2001. Initially I contacted staff from two English Universities to gain access to meet their adult returnees. Tutors from institutions helped me distribute the questionnaires to ensure return. The HE institutions involved in this research are described in the previous section. For geographical reasons, I could not talk to the students until they came to their classes in the university. I invited them to come to an empty classroom where our conversation would not be interrupted by phone calls or visitors. Most of them showed willingness to answer all the questions I proposed. I was not confident when I was using a foreign language during the conversation, but they were sympathetic to my anxiety as a foreigner, which helped me to carry on our conversation smoothly. In total, 210 questionnaires were given out in three institutions of which 87 copies were returned, a response rate of 41.43%.

The research process in Daisy University was not going well as I had difficulty in getting as many adult students as I wanted from their first and second year on selected degree programmes. Although they have quite a large number of adult returnees, I only met a small number of them. Questionnaires were given out in a first year class of mainly young adult returnees who were in their twenties and had had a few years' gap before returning to learn at Daisy University. In total, 70 questionnaires were given out, of which only 12 were returned
to me. Despite the low response from Daisy University, I tried to contact students among the 12 responses to gain opportunities to interview them. At the beginning three students were promised to come to talk to me. We had arranged meetings with some of young adult returnees who would have liked to assist with our interviews, however, none of them appeared at the appointed time. Further contacts were made but eventually I decided to give up the plan of interviewing respondents from Daisy University. Half a year later I was assisted in gaining interview access to Miners' University where adult returnees were mainly from the working class. At Miners' University, a total of 70 questionnaires were given out and 22 were returned. The process of data collection in the three English Universities began in June 2001 but was not completed until June 2002.

6.4.3 Profile of Universities and Adult Returnees in Taiwan

Three HE institutions participated in this study in Taiwan. The profile of each institution and adult returnees is given below.

6.4.3.1 “Jade University”

The University is situated in southern Taiwan and recruits students from secondary schools and secondary vocational schools. The University aims to prepare professionals in the fields of Pharmacy, Health and Management. Jade University was founded with the title of ‘Jade College Pharmacy’ in 1964 and authorized by the Ministry of Education to change its name to ‘Jade College of Pharmacy and Science’ in 1996, providing both junior college and two-year programmes at college level. A four-year programme was established in 1998. The institute upgraded to ‘Jade University of Pharmacy and Science’ in 2000 after authorisation by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. By then the junior college had ceased to exist and a programme of Teacher Education for Secondary Schools was added. Since 2001, the
University has offered Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes. New Departments have been set up since 2001: Hotel and Restaurant Management, Biotechnology, Environmental Engineering, Health and Teacher Education for Early Childhood Education. As we can see, the University provides a variety of professionals both to students and society.

The adult returnees I met were from the Department of Social Work which was called the Department of Youth and Children Welfare when I visited the University in November 2001. Adult returnees were undertaking their Bachelor’s degree in a four-year university night school programme. They were in their first and second year of study at the time. The profiles of students were mainly young female adults in their mid-twenties and early thirties who had a short gap after leaving school. Some adult returnees had full-time jobs during the daytime. Many of them were working as nursery assistants. There were a number of young adults without any working experience who entered the University immediately after their secondary education. Both adult returnees and traditional students entered University through the traditional way of the ‘University Joint Entrance Examination- Vocational Division’. There is no alternative way for adult returnees who wanted to study in this University in terms of qualifications.

6.4.3.2 “Phoenix University”

Phoenix University is situated in central Taiwan and recruits students from secondary high schools and vocational secondary high schools. It aims to train professionals in technological fields, for instance, Electrical, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Computer Engineering and Management Studies. The Department of Applied English Language has been established in recent years and enjoys a good reputation among institutes in central Taiwan.

The adult returnees I met were undertaking their Bachelor’s in a two-year supplement
They came to study only during the weekends - Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning. Each class consisted of approximately 30 students which was considered a small group. Students came from varied educational backgrounds: some already had higher education, some secondary qualification only and the others a few years’ gap before returning to learn at Phoenix. Their ages ranged widely from their late 30s to early 50s. Their professional backgrounds were rather varied. Commonly they had been working for years and it seemed to me that English was one of the requirements in their jobs. Thus, to increase their knowledge of the English language was the common reason for those students who chose to study at Phoenix. There were some adult returnees who undertook their studies for personal reasons rather than vocational ones. All of the respondents entered Phoenix through the ‘entrance examination’ which is separate from the ‘University Entrance Examination- Vocational Division’.

6.4.3.3 ”Pearl University”

Pearl University is a community university which uses radio, cable-television and local-area computer networks as its main instruction methods. It was founded in January 1997 and began teaching that September. The University offers a Bachelor programme only. Generally speaking, students spend 5 years to meet the requirements of academic units. Currently the University consists of 5 academic departments: Law and Political Science, Industry and Business, Management, Mass Communication, Foreign Language and Literature and Culture and Art. According to their latest record on staff profile, there are only 6 full-time faculties with associate professors and lecturers so that part-time faculties undertake the bulk of teaching at Pearl University. Students I met were mainly adult students who came from different professions and age cohorts. Their major subjects were varied, too. Many of them were full-time housewives and retired people who did not seek an opportunity for finding a
job after completing their study. They came to study for personal reasons. However, students who registered in Law and Political Science apparently had vocational intentions since they tended to obtain the professional certificates in the field of law for which Pearl University provided the requisite classes.

6.4.4 How I Conducted the Research in Taiwan

The fieldwork in Taiwan was carried out between November 2001 and January 2002. Each University was given 70 copies of questionnaires; the number returned varied. I received 60 completed questionnaires from Jade University, 55 from Phoenix University and 65 from Pearl University, a return rate of 85.7%. I contacted staff from the Universities before I went to visit their students. Then I discussed my reasons with teachers and decided to meet students in their classrooms at fixed dates. When I visited Jade University and Phoenix University, the surveys were conducted after the lectures. Teachers assisted me to enter their classes in order to explain my research more fully in front of their students. Students were given enough time to complete their questionnaires in the classes and returned them to me when they left. Similarly, adult students from Phoenix University completed their questionnaires before they left classes. All the interviews were conducted in the offices of lecturers which were quiet. The date of interviewing was a week after they had returned the questionnaires to me. Some adult students could not come to do their interviews due to family commitments, e.g. picking up their children from schools. It did not seem easy to find a convenient interviewing time to meet adult students when I was in Taiwan. Single female students also had problems to find spare time to come to meet up due to their paid employment during daytime or weekends. Pearl University is a community University with mainly adult students. The group of students from distance learning programmes are not
included in this study. Depending on the type of chosen programmes, some students from Pearl University came to their lectures once a week, others once every two weeks. The campus is very small but located in a geographically convenient place. All the interviews from Pearl were arranged in advance in order to meet their family commitments.

In sum, 420 questionnaires were given out to the six higher education institutions in the UK and Taiwan of which 267 were returned, making the response rate approximately 63.6%. Additionally, 31 people were involved in interviews. Initially interviewees were selected, in part, from the reply sheets I enclosed at the end of surveys which were distributed to each University. Apparently they were not selected through a ‘snowball’ process as normally many researches did. Since I was interested to gather women from different age cohorts, I did try to balance the number of interviewees from their response sheets in terms of age. In addition, a few men showed interest in being involved in the interviews and were mostly recruited to participate in the interviewing, regardless of age. An interesting impression I received from the interviewees in Taiwan was that the students thought they would be given a higher grade by their teachers if they participated. Hopefully, this is not entirely true.

6.5 Conclusion

Adult returnees in this study are from six higher education institutions in both countries who present a variety of profiles in terms of age, social class and educational experiences. According to their diverse background, I am interested in looking at the barriers and opportunities while they are returning to learn in higher education institutions. Feminism approach interviews were chosen for this research not only to allow women’s voices to be heard but to gain a complete knowledge of women’s life transformation in terms of barriers and opportunities when returning to HE. The experiences which adult returnees related to me
not only represent an individual’s life but also the changes in the societies in which they were brought up.

I am now in a position to be able to undertake the analysis through women’s life experiences. In the following chapter, quantitative data will be presented in graphics and tables to gain a broad picture of the profile of adult returnees who were involved in this study. Qualitative data will be presented in subsequent chapters in the sequences of research questions. The three research questions will lead my discussion on three aspects: gender, age and comparison between the two countries.
Chapter Seven: The Quantitative Data from the Respondents

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a quantitative data analysis of the study. It analyses and compares firstly the personal information about the respondents: country, age, gender, ethnicity, institution, marital status, number of children and financial circumstance. Secondly, their educational background: type of school, school leaving age, the first destination after school and the highest qualification gained before returning to education. These details will help me to compare and analyse the questions answered by interviewees in the following chapter. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used in this study. All the questions in the questionnaire were pre-coded so that each answer was given a specific number for the purpose of analysis within the study.

7.2 Demographic Characteristics

7.2.1 Country

The number of questionnaires returned by English respondents was considerably lower than that received from respondents in Taiwan. It is possible that my identity as a foreigner and a student may have caused difficulties in approaching respondents from English Higher Education institutions. However, as more research has already been done in the UK, this can help to compensate for the smaller amount of UK questionnaire data; the apparent ‘shortfall’ can be supported by my secondary reading to back up my research findings in the UK. Conversely, the number of responses collected in Taiwan provides a complex picture to support the lack of secondary research published in this field from Taiwan. The higher response rate from Taiwan can be accounted for as a result of my identity as a former teacher.
in the higher education institution that helped me to approach the Taiwanese respondents with comparative ease. As a result, in total 267 questionnaires were returned out of the 420 copies that were circulated in both countries. The questionnaire response rates were 41.43% in the UK and 85.71% in Taiwan (see Table 7.1). Qualitative data were collected from 31 interviews in the two nations. The number of interviewees was designed to be equivalent from both countries; however, some interviewees from the English institutions suddenly decided not to take part in this study. The possible reasons for this could be the time taken to arrange a discussion with the researcher, since many of the mature students taking part had other commitments in their lives apart from coming to study at university and mature students may not be really interested in discussing this subject again, given that they might have already done so before they came to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1 Number of responses by country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviewees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( N = \text{total number of questionnaires given out to each country} \)

7.2.2 Age

When the number of respondents is broken down by age, the questionnaire results show that the majority are from the youngest age group, while the middle-aged respondents make up the major group approached in the interviews (see Table 7.2). Considering that the selection of the sample in this study is random, and that the institutions where the mature students studied (in both countries) are not catering mainly for their age group, the large group of more 'traditional' students occupying the youngest age group in this study is understandably high. When it came to the interview stage of the research, the interviewees were chosen according
to their own willingness to participate after they had completed the questionnaires. It is worth mentioning that the departments in the institutions chosen for this research (in both countries) were selected because of their policy of recruiting mature students into their student body; this allowed for more valid comparisons between the data collected and contrasted in each country, particularly as fewer departments in Taiwanese institutions have any access for mature students. Consequently, the sample has to be seen in the context of a learning environment where the departments are accommodating both mature and ‘traditional’ younger students. Details of the types of institutions selected for this study will be shown later in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.2: The number of respondents by age</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N of respondents (%)</th>
<th>34 and younger</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55 and above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of respondents (%)</td>
<td>191(71.8%)</td>
<td>50(18.8%)</td>
<td>25(9.4%)</td>
<td>266(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of interviewees (%)</td>
<td>4(12.9%)</td>
<td>22(70.97%)</td>
<td>5(16.13%)</td>
<td>31(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 =$ 58.319  df 2  Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) 0.000

When the age of respondents is broken down by country, both the UK and Taiwan have replies from mainly younger adults to the questionnaires (see Table 7.3). These results concur with the findings published by the National Adult Learning Survey that indicates that the highest learning participation rates are found among adults aged 20-49. The learning participation figures decline among the 50-59 and the 60-69 age groups. The sharpest decline, however, occurs among respondents aged 70 and over who had undertaken some learning in previous years (NALS, 2001: 16). Both in the UK and Taiwan, the percentages of respondents
from interviews are mainly gathered in the group of 35-54 years old. Compared with their English counterparts there are higher percentages of younger adult participants in Taiwan in this study when it moved to the interview stage. It is seen that the Taiwanese participants who return to learn at university are comparatively young; older people are seldom found at the third level of education. It is possible to interpret Taiwan changes after the UK that the learning habits of Chinese people in Taiwan as limited to a young age; furthermore most of the third level institutions in Taiwan, except the two Open Universities have entrance requirements for all applicants. Similarly, numerous English universities have entrance requirements for adult students: English mature students can only study courses designed for non-traditional students. In the UK, there was a veritable explosion in all-forms of post-school education, including the universities, due to the growing demand from adults for refresher and training courses, in subjects of professional interest: on the other hand there was a tremendous upsurge of interest in hobbies, music and the arts. University Adult Education Departments (or extramural departments) started to be well known in the post-war period (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, since the early 1970s there has been a marked increase in the types of education available for women, although the provision has been patchy and insufficient (see Chapter Three).

In this study selected samples needed from those institutions where the majority are adult students. These are courses designed for non-traditional students, which is why the major age cohort in this study from the English universities is comparatively older than their Taiwanese counterparts. Consequently the government policy in England on widening participation urged universities to provide different entrance routes for adults returning to learning. Further investigation on age will be discussed in the following chapter.
Table 7.3 Age of respondents by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of questionnaires</td>
<td>N of interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 and younger</td>
<td>41(47.12%)</td>
<td>2 (11.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>23(26.43%)</td>
<td>11 (61.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and above</td>
<td>23(26.43%)</td>
<td>5 (27.78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87(100%)</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaires/Age P<0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58.319</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews/Age P>0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.479</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4 shows the result of Chi-square value $\chi^2 = 143.04$ and $p<0.001$. Hence, it is significant between institution and the age of respondents. The six institutions in this study are generally not typical of mainstream universities in both countries. In the UK, the respondents from Bright and Miners’ belong to the Department of ACE (Department of Adult and Continuing Education) while Daisy University, as a newly established institution, has a different student body from other mainstream English universities. Table 7.4 shows Bright University consists of a significant number of older adults because the Department of ACE provides a wide range of courses not only in liberal studies but also certificate programmes to meet the needs of mature students of all kinds. The reason why the majority of adults at Bright University are 35-54 years old and above is because education was seen as a form of leisure study and adults select the type of institution geographically convenient for them. Different from traditional university students, these adults have a stable life where many have
grown-up children that allow them to have more free time to do things purely for themselves.

Besides, the Department of ACE is located on the main campus of Bright University and the programmes it provides lead to future university degrees, accepted by other English universities. Hence, the policy of the Department gives adults aged 35-54 years and above more opportunities to experience a university environment. The respondents from Miners’ University also belong to the Department of ACE where the major student body is mature, working class and without formal qualifications. They are between 35 and 54 years old.

Similar to the respondents from Bright the type of study and schedule allows them, mainly adult women students, to cope with their studies and family schedules, sometimes also with a paid part-time or full-time job, at the same time. Daisy University is located in a suburb area surrounded by various ethnic groups such as Chinese, African and Caribbean communities. This newly established University, formally a polytechnic, attracts many students of the new generation from these diverse ethnic communities nearby. Its geographical location and its profile as a dynamic university with good reputation and diversity attracts young adults from these groups who left their education shortly before they returned to HE.

By contrast, in Taiwan Pearl University is the only higher education institution purely for adults which does not require formal qualifications for university entrance examinations. It is not surprising that the majority of students are 35-54 years old, who are mothers, housewives and sometimes have a full-time paid job. Similar to Bright University, Pearl University provides different types of learning programmes and access, for example traditional face-to-face class teaching and distance learning programmes in liberal and professional subjects. Due to the competition in the area among the institutions where Pearl University is located and also to the overall perception of Pearl University as lower than other mainstream universities in Taiwan, younger adult students may go to mainstream universities and older adults may prefer institutions such as ‘Older People’s University’ or ‘Evergreen University’.
Phoenix and Jade Universities were formerly called Colleges of Technology which offer professional training programmes for both traditional and non-traditional students are interested in advancing their future careers. Therefore these two institutions have considerably younger students. Similar to the expansion of English higher education, the government policies in Taiwan have encouraged the growth of the number of institutions and students of higher education over the past decade. This significant increase in Taiwanese higher education began in the mid-1980. Three new institutions were established between 1976 and 1986. By 2000 there were 127 institutions, growing by 350%, with a student body of 647,000 increased by 2.27% (Directorate General of Budget, 2002). Additionally, as Taiwan is facing the demands of economic growth, higher education has hastened to expand access for non-traditional students aged over 25. Apart from two Open Universities, a variety of extension programmes are on offer by higher education institutions in Taiwan whose policy is based on recruiting more students from diverse age groups. Therefore it is not surprising to know that Institutions of Technology - such as Jade and Phoenix - have a significant proportion of respondents in the age group 34 years and younger. On the other hand, compared with their English counterparts, Taiwanese institutions have a large proportion of 35-54 years old students which may be interpreted through not only changes of family norms but also the wide use of advanced information technology in the household over the last two decades.
Table 7.4 Age of questionnaire respondents by country and institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bright 3(5.9%)</td>
<td>Miners 3(13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daisy 12(85.7%)</td>
<td>Phoenix 23(41.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 and younger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pearl 14(21.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jade 55(93.2%)</td>
<td>Total 110(41.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>41(80.4%)</td>
<td>19(86.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1(7.1%)</td>
<td>32(58.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and above</td>
<td>7(13.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51(100%)</td>
<td>22(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country/ Age P<0.001

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 108.421$ 10 .000

Institution/ Age P<0.001

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 58.319$ 2 .000

7.2.3 Gender

Table 7.5 demonstrates that there is an association between gender, country and institution. As this study focuses on mature women students, the major student body is female; however, a group of males is included in order to compare and analyse whether the differences and similarities are based on gender issue. Besides, the type of subjects adults undertake influence the gender ratio since females tend to be the larger group in Arts and Social Science subjects. The findings from this study may not concur with the broad picture in adult learning since a different result on gender gap is found in the 2001 National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) in England showing no gender gap in terms of percentage among all taught programmes while there are more men than women involved in self-directed learning. It is possible to interpret that the results found in NALS are based on all kinds of learning. The particular kinds of programme indicate the existence of a gender gap caused by type of subjects. NALS (2001: 146
17) found women were less likely than men to have done some vocational learning but more likely to have done non-vocational learning.

Table 7.5 Gender of respondents by country and institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th></th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>Miners'</td>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42(82.35%)</td>
<td>17(77.27%)</td>
<td>58(96.67%)</td>
<td>39(70.91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9(17.65%)</td>
<td>5(22.73%)</td>
<td>2(3.33%)</td>
<td>16(29.09%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pearl</th>
<th>Jade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48(73.85%)</td>
<td>6(42.86%)</td>
<td>6(42.86%)</td>
<td>210(78.65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17(26.15%)</td>
<td>8(57.14%)</td>
<td>57(21.35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 25.579$ 5 .000

P>0.01

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 1.193$ 1 0.275

7.2.4 Ethnicity and Class

Table 7.6 shows the ethnic groups and class of the respondents. These are not random samples in this study. The respondents’ diverse ethnic backgrounds and social classes provide a spectrum analysis of issues between countries, age and gender. In the UK, Bright University comprises English students who are white and middle class; Miners’ has English, white and working class respondents, while Daisy University includes multi-ethnic groups from Chinese, African and Caribbean communities. The Taiwanese respondents are mainlanders, Fukienese and Hakka people that are all ethnically Chinese. However, the cultural and family ideology may be different from one to another. Adult returnees with Taiwanese ethnicity tended to be the majority in this study.
Table 7.6 Ethnicity and class of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Bright</th>
<th>Miners’</th>
<th>Daisy</th>
<th>Phoenix</th>
<th>Pearl</th>
<th>Jade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.5 Institutions

The low response rate resulted from Daisy University (see Table 7.7). The details have been explained in an earlier section. Amongst English institutions, the highest response rate from Bright is probably the result of the easier approach to their respondents and tutors, as was the case with three institutions in Taiwan.

Table 7.7: Number of respondents by institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bright University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of respondents</td>
<td>51(N=70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of interviewees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Value     df    Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 267.000$ 5  .000

148
7.2.6 Marital Status

In examining whether there is an association between country and marital status, Chi-Square results show p<0.001. Hence country reflects the marital status of respondents in this study (see Table 7.8). The group of single respondents from the UK is about one third of married respondents. It is possible that single respondents may go to other types of activities instead of attending education at university. There is also the issue of the barriers to undertaking education encountered by single adults females. The details of such barriers in women’s lives need further analysis and will be discussed in the following chapter. Interestingly, the gap between single and married adults in Taiwan is smaller compared with their English counterparts. It is possible to say, firstly, that in Taiwan single adults have more authority in their personal life. Taiwan society has been influenced strongly by Confucian values which can be seen in many aspects in its social customs as well as in its family norm (see Chapter Four). In the Chinese family the opportunities for gaining education for daughters are equal to those for sons nowadays. According to Thornton and Lin’s study (1994: 2)…social and economic changes like those experienced in Taiwan after the 1940s would lead to many family changes. Secondly, single adults may look for opportunities to meet others apart from their daily routine office work. Hence educational institutions provide adults with the environment to meet other people who have similar interests and knowledge background. From the proportion of married or divorced women returning to education it is possible to surmise that something happened in their family life or personal circumstances. Details of family and personal circumstances will be analysed and compared in the following chapter.
Table 7.8 Marital Status of respondents by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of questionnaires</td>
<td>N of interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>23 (26.4%)</td>
<td>2 (11.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/divorced/separated</td>
<td>64 (73.6%)</td>
<td>15 (88.23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 140.340$ 2 .000

P<0.001

Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2 = 42.575$ 3 .000

7.2.7 Number of Children

There is an association between country and number of children. The English respondents tend to have two or more children compared with their Taiwanese counterparts who have two or fewer in the family. Table 7.9 shows the majority of English respondents have 2 or 3 children. It can be seen that the English women grew up in the period when shortage of labour in the post-war years encouraged more women to stay in the workforce. But British society was in a reversal of the trend of the previous half-century, most working-class families were having the smallest number of children, whereas middle-class parents were beginning to have slightly larger families. The two-child norm was firmly established by the post-war years as it appeared to be accepted by many families on the one hand. On the other, women were encouraged to enter the labour market during the war. However, when the war ended more women returned to the home than had been hoped. Women decided to start families having
delayed marriage or childbirth due to the war, hence the post-war baby boom occurred. Table 7.10 shows the oldest cohort in the UK tended to have more children. Since 1990 a two-phase work pattern (childbearing and paid employment) has been established as the norm for most women. The trend towards smaller family size has continued.

Table 7.9 Number of children of respondents by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N of children</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of questionnaires</td>
<td>N of interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>33(39.5%)</td>
<td>2(11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6(8.9%)</td>
<td>2(11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27(31.3%)</td>
<td>12(66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16(18.6%)</td>
<td>2(11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>3(3.5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86(100%)</td>
<td>18(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.01

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2$ = 16.624 df 4 Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .002

P>0.01

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2$ = 2.331 df 3 Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .507

Compared with their English counterparts, the birth rate in Taiwan declined from 0.466% in 1952 to 0.153% in 1994 in Taiwan (see Chapter Four). The remarkable decline in fertility is regarded as the outcome of delays in marriage, but the most important factor was the overwhelming acceptance of modern contraception among married women. Prevalence rates for modern contraceptives in the mid-1990s increased to 74% in Taiwan (see Chapter Four). Therefore the size of family has been reduced significantly in Taiwan since then. Also, the traditional extended family was replaced by the nuclear family, the young generation tends to
have fewer children. The lowest fertility rate of 1.3 (the rate of giving birth among women between 15 and 49 years old) occurred in Taiwan in 2002 compared with 1.37 in Singapore and 1.9 in France (Directorate General of Budget, 2002). The statistical result concurs with the finding from this study that Taiwanese respondents report having no children at the youngest cohort (see Table 7.10). The phenomenon of women in Taiwan involved in paid work outside the home and the issue of child caring are concerns for women. The latest statistical report found 72.3% of Taiwanese women aged 16-64 look after their 3 years old or younger child on their own while 20.7% of women have older parents or other relatives to take care of their child. Only 6.53% of Taiwanese women send their child to a nursery or have a paid nanny (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan 2000).

Table 7.10 Number of children of questionnaire respondents by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>34 and younger</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55 and above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17(8.9%)</td>
<td>6(12%)</td>
<td>3(13.04%)</td>
<td>26(9.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33(17.3%)</td>
<td>25(50%)</td>
<td>6(26.09%)</td>
<td>64(39.02%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11(5.76%)</td>
<td>10(20%)</td>
<td>7(30.43%)</td>
<td>28(10.61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>1(0.52%)</td>
<td>3(6%)</td>
<td>2(8.7%)</td>
<td>6(2.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>129(67.54%)</td>
<td>6(12%)</td>
<td>5(21.74%)</td>
<td>140(53.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191(100%)</td>
<td>50(100%)</td>
<td>23(100%)</td>
<td>264(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Pearson Chi-Square \( \chi^2 \) = 72.607  8  .000

7.2.8 Financial Circumstances

The majority of English respondents in this study have a personal income of less than £20,000 annually (See Table 7.11). This is because most of them are full-time housewives and some
may have lower wages of part-time jobs. Graphic 7.1 shows the average personal income of the English respondents is between £25,000 and £30,000 annually (Mean= 3.2). The results from NALS in 2001 showed some adult learners were found at the top income group (£31,200 household income), declining steadily among the lowest income groups between £10,400 and £20,799 (NALS, 2001: 30). Most of the English respondents in this study are disadvantaged economically, so it is not surprising to learn that their personal annual income is lower.

In order to investigate the respondents’ economic circumstances it is necessary to include their household income.

Graphic 7.1

**Personal income: UK**

- **Frequency**
  - 0-2.0: 10
  - 2.0-4.0: 20
  - 4.0-6.0: 15
  - 6.0-8.0: 10
  - 8.0-10.0: 5

- **Statistics**
  - **Mean** = 3.2
  - **Std. Dev.** = 3.34
  - **N** = 80.00

Graphic 7.2

**Household income: UK**

- **Frequency**
  - 0-2.0: 10
  - 2.0-4.0: 20
  - 4.0-6.0: 15
  - 6.0-8.0: 10
  - 8.0-10.0: 5

- **Statistics**
  - **Mean** = 4.9
  - **Std. Dev.** = 3.14
  - **N** = 80.00

The amount of household income of the respondents in the UK appears at two peaks: one group is at the lowest level, i.e. lower than £20,000 annually, and the other one reaches the top level, i.e. £45,000 and above annually (see Table 7.11). The English respondents from the top income group reinforced the findings from NALS that 91% of respondents with a household income of £30,200 and above, and also a significant number of respondents from the £20,800-£31,199 income group reported learning in 2001 (ibid). The data of lowest
household income can be gathered from certain groups of English respondents — single parents, retired people, working class and ethnic minorities who are regarded as disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities.

Table 7.11 Income of respondents: UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK Category</th>
<th>Personal income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than £20,000</td>
<td>1 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£25,001-£30,000</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£25,001-£30,000</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30,001-£35,000</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£35,001-£40,000</td>
<td>5 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,001-£45,000</td>
<td>6 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£45,001 and above</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>8 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>9 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>10 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=80(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9(11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6(7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(17.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9(11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2$</td>
<td>143.605</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with their English counterparts, the personal income of the majority of Taiwanese respondents is also low. Graphic 7.3 shows the highest proportions of respondents from Taiwan whose personal incomes fall within the first two categories (below £4,166 and between £4,167 and £5,833 annually) that are considered low according to national statistics. The personal net income in 2002 for females was 376,684 NT dollars (£6,278 approximately) annually and for males 528,235 NT dollars (£8,803 approximately). In 2004, the per capita
GNP in Taiwan was 468,956 NT dollars (£7,815 approximately) (Directorate General of Budget, 2004). Possible reasons for this could be that, first, a large proportion of young respondents involved in this study are full-time university students; second, the group of respondents who are housewives do not have any self-earned income. Hence the personal income of the respondents in this study is comparatively low, regardless of country.

Compared with the UK, it was not easy to ascertain the household income from Taiwanese respondents. Graphic 7.4 shows that a significant number of respondents tend not to report their household incomes. This may be partly for the cultural reason that Chinese people in Taiwan are reluctant to reveal their family financial state to other people. It could also be that their household incomes are extreme - either quite poor or quite affluent.
Table 7.12 Income of respondents: Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Personal income</th>
<th>Household income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 250,000 NTD (Less than £4,166)</td>
<td>N=188(%) 52(28.9%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 5(2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,001-350,000 NTD (£4,167-£5,833)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 18(10%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 4(2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350,001-450,000 NTD (£5,834-£7,500)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 18(10%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 3(1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450,001-550,000 NTD (£7,501-£9,166)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 6(3.3%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 8(4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550,001-650,000 NTD (£9,167-£10,833)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 8(4.4%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 9(5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>650,001-750,000 NTD (£10,834-£12,500)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 7(3.9%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 10(5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750,001 and above NTD (£12,501 and above)</td>
<td>N=186(%) 12(6.7%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 33(18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>N=186(%) 21(11.7%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 2(1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>N=186(%) 13(7.2%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 71(40.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>N=186(%) 25(13.9%)</td>
<td>N=176(%) 31(17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N=268(100%)</td>
<td>N=268(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2$ = 265.721

The above findings show the differences and similarities of the respondents from the two nations in terms of personal and educational background. These provide me with the complete picture to analyse and compare the barriers and opportunities for adult women returnees in the UK and Taiwan.
In the next section the educational background of the respondents will be brought into the discussion and, with the findings above, will show the complex picture of adult women returnees involved in this study. This will necessitate in-depth discussions through the interview data presented in the following chapter.

7.3 Educational Background

This section analyses and compares the relationship between current learning and the respondents’ educational background, which is explored by looking at the type of schools, school leaving age, destination after schooling and the highest qualification gained before returning to learning in the two countries.

7.3.1 Types of School

Both in the UK and Taiwan, the type of schools that the respondent attended tend to decide whether the respondents would go on to further education or go to work. Table 7.13 shows that UK respondents went to different types of schools where state grammar schools were of academic orientation, the others mainly vocational. It shows that the less academically-inclined at school did not move on to further education. However, there is a group of respondents who attended leading academic schools but stopped moving on to further education at a young age, possibly for a variety of personal reasons. This needed to be investigated in-depth, and details of different issues in their lives will be shown in the following chapter.

Similarly, in Taiwan the type of schools the respondents attend affects their future career destination. Vocational secondary schools in Taiwan gain many pupils from junior high
schools who have filtered through the secondary school entrance examinations. In general, the most academically able students attend senior high schools, and the less academic students or those who are not interested in academic study attend the vocational high schools. The large proportion of respondents who gained a third level degree means that by returning to university they tend to look for something particular to satisfy their own needs. The type of schools only provide a general picture of the respondents' former educational experiences; further details need to be analysed and compared through the interview data in the next chapter.

Table 7.13 Questionnaire responses about type of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1(0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>20(24.1%)</td>
<td>23(12.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modem/comprehensive/ Senior High School (TW)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive/ State</td>
<td>20(24.1%)/18(21.69%)</td>
<td>119(66.1%)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar/ Sixth form</td>
<td>8(9.64%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college Public or other</td>
<td>9(10.84%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent school/ School outside UK/ Vocational High School (TW)</td>
<td>/8(9.64%)/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>32(17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5(2.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.2 School Leaving Age

Table 7.14 shows that the English respondents left school at a much younger age than their counterparts from Taiwan. In the UK those who did not go to university at age 16 have returned now. However, the English findings in this study do not support the previous NALS results that showed 65% of respondents had left full-time education at age 16 or younger compared with 93% of those who left when they were 21 or older. The possible reason could be that the findings collected from NALS include all kinds of learning while the English respondents in this study are undertaking mainly full-time/part-time degree university learning. In Taiwan, as mentioned in Chapter Four, the opportunity for women to attend higher education has increased year by year. Hence there is a large proportion of respondents who stay on in education until age 21 or older (see Table 7.14). The net enrolment ratio in higher education is around 31% of the relevant age group, which is not significantly different from those of USA, France, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (see Chapter Four). It is possible to interpret that education is valued greatly in most Chinese families in Taiwan due to Confucianism.

Table 7.14 Questionnaire respondents' school leaving age by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK (N=86)</th>
<th>Taiwan (N=177)</th>
<th>Total (N=263)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 16</td>
<td>52(60.47%)</td>
<td>2(1.1%)</td>
<td>54(20.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-21</td>
<td>34(39.53%)</td>
<td>144(81.56%)</td>
<td>178(67.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26(14.69%)</td>
<td>26(9.88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5(2.82%)</td>
<td>5(1.90%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2$</td>
<td>129.263</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

159
7.3.3 First Destination After School

Table 7.15 shows that a significant number of the English respondents went to a full-time job without study at a third level institution. This reflects the type of school they attended. Despite possible personal willingness there might be some circumstances in which taking a full-time job comes before continuing their education. Such circumstances will be compared and analysed throughout the interview data in the following chapter. Compared with their English counterparts, Taiwanese respondents tend to go to a full-time job without studying. A small group of respondents report that they are preparing for examination towards further education. The number belonging to this group is not significant. It is possible that their vocational secondary school background allows these people to be ready to be involved in the workplace rather than carry on their education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.15 First destination after school of the respondents by country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK (N=86)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time job, non-degree course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time job, no study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time job and degree course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnic/College/University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare exam for further education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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P<0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square ( \chi^2 )</td>
<td>54.511</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the number of respondents is broken down by age, Table 7.16 shows the group of respondents aged 54 and younger tend to have a full-time job without any study. It is not clear what made these people take full-time jobs; however, the respondents from the youngest-to-middle-age group grew up in a different period of time, in societies where the barriers and opportunities they encountered may have remained despite the progress in increasing educational and job opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.16 First destination after school by age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 and younger (N=191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time job non-degree course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time job no study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time job and degree course</td>
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<td>Polytechnic /College/University</td>
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<td>Prepare exam for further education</td>
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<td>Housewife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.01

Pearson Chi-Square $\chi^2= 33.790$  
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .006

7.4 Conclusion

There are five fundamental points in this chapter which look at the differences and similarities of adult women returnees in the UK and Taiwan respectively. The major findings are firstly,
that both the UK and Taiwan contain a large group of younger respondents while the middle-aged cohort is considered as the second largest student body, particularly in the English institutions. This is because English Higher Educational Institutions were initiated earlier than their Taiwanese counterparts in terms of serving non-traditional students. However, UK institutions have a comparatively large intake of older respondents compared with their Taiwanese counterparts (see p.143). Secondly, both the UK and Taiwan have people of diverse ethnic backgrounds; both nations provided diverse pictures despite the majority of respondents from Taiwan being ethnically Chinese (see p.147). Thirdly, the majority of female participants in this study are married with two children regardless of country. By contrast, females who remain single and have less number of children tend to be found from the institutions in Taiwan (see p.149). Fourthly, both in the UK and Taiwan, adult female respondents in this study are individually in a poor financial situation because they are mainly full-time housewives, full-time students or retired. However, the household income is different from nation to nation: the English respondents’ family economic situation could be either poor or affluent, while the Taiwanese respondents tend to have a more stable family financial condition by and large, although a significant proportion of them are reluctant to provide information on their family financial circumstances (see p.150-154). Lastly, both in the UK and Taiwan, the type of schools and school leaving age tend to influence the respondents’ future career. The majority of English respondents left school at age 16 while a significant number of Taiwanese respondents have stayed on in education until aged 21 or older. It is possible to say that the respondents from Taiwan were influenced by Confucianism which places a high value on education (see p.158). Certainly there are more issues coming out in the survey of the family and personal circumstances of individual respondents that need to be brought into discussion. These issues will be compared and analysed through the interviews presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 8
Barriers and Opportunities

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven the quantitative data indicated the differences and similarities of adult women returnees between the UK and Taiwan in terms of personal and educational backgrounds. In this chapter, the discussion moves to look at the relationship between barriers and opportunities, and age and country factors. Here I assume barriers and opportunities are two sides of one coin, that is, barriers may be decreased and turned to opportunities under certain circumstances throughout the generations. Women returnees in this research are a large group with wide differences in age, ethnicity, personal and financial circumstances and educational backgrounds. They fall into three broad clusters: situational, dispositional (psychological) obstacles, and structural obstacles. When the research examines the difficulties in more detail, the extent to which the obstacles to women's returning to higher education are inter-related and mutually reinforcing becomes clear. It is important to mention that the results of this comparative study indicate that barriers may remain due to either the subjective perceptions by each individual or other influences made by related situations and structures. The adult women in this research are from two nations and the pattern of changes occurring in two societies may not be alike. It is necessary to look at the changes and influences resulting from the culture and social context. Gender issues cannot be ignored because they may be the result of different perspectives from male respondents. Therefore a small number of male respondents is included as a control group here. There is no interviewee from the older group to allow me to compare the respondents from the older age cohort in Taiwan. As a result the changes will be compared and analysed among the age cohorts within the same country. The differences of each age cohort will be highlighted from
both countries. The results, at the end of this chapter, will allow the researcher to answer the following questions: Do younger women returnees have more opportunities and lower barriers than their older counterparts when returning to HE? How far have the barriers and opportunities for women returning to HE been caused by social and gender factors? The qualitative data used here are regarded as one of the multi sources of the triangulation, apart from quantitative data, in order to understand the particular phenomenon of adult women returnees from two societies. Jick (1979: 604) suggested that the use of the between-methods can be assumed to be the standard usage of triangulation due to its fundamental assumption: ‘The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weakness in each single method will be compensated for by the counter-balancing strengths of another’. In this research, triangulation is strengthened because two data collection methods (questionnaire and interview) were used. Multiple sources of experiences (literature reviews) are additional evidence of triangulation.

8.2 Part One: Situational barriers

It is well established that women’s opportunities and barriers in education are hugely affected by their family and personal circumstances, for example, parents’ attitudes to and values placed on early school experiences, partner’s and children’s attitudes on current study, time constraints, financial constraints and other individual circumstances. The adult participants in this study are divided into three age cohorts with possibly different barriers over the past few decades. Hence, in this section I shall investigate the changes in the family ideology and patriarchal society where the younger women may be provided with more opportunities to participate in education, while participants from the middle and older age cohorts are still deterred by women’s traditional roles of mother or housewife in the family. I assume these are
adult participants whose situational barriers have been removed through the past generations but maintained the role as mother and housewife in the social context which does not provide women with enough freedom and space to engage in other activities, such as returning to learning. It is important that women's own perceptions as mother and housewife depend on how other family members perceive women's returning to learn. Women's own perceptions on their study activity will be addressed further in the section on dispositional barriers below.

As adult participants in this study are from two nations, situational barriers could possibly result from the differences inherent in the particular society in which the women were brought up. For example, class difference may be regarded as a significant factor among English respondents while ethnic differences may be a key factor for adult participants in Taiwan.

I shall start with parents' attitudes and values put on women's early school experiences.

### 8.2.1 Parents' Attitudes and Values

In the UK, ten of the 18 interviewees focused on this issue where five women and one man from the older age cohort and four from the middle aged cohort reported that their parents did not encourage girls' education after their schooling. However, none of the interviewees in the younger age cohort reported the same. It shows that the idea of boys' education as more important than girls' mainly occurred in the generation of older and middle aged cohorts in the UK. The gender differentiation within the family was reinforced at school where education was preparing girls for their future marital life. English interviewee Sharon seemed to be proud of herself when she told about her achievements at school. She attended a grammar school where 10% of pupils in her year could pass the entrance examination and she was one of them. Sharon was forced to stop her further education mainly because of her father's attitude regardless of her academic ability at school. Later when she talked about her
return to higher education at age 65, she found that there was a great difference from her brother who greatly encouraged her return to learn despite her age. Her family's attitude was a huge negative impact. She had been hoping to gain a more positive attitude to her further education from her parents at a young age but could not. Had they done so the results might have been different for her. She said:

My father told me I had to leave. My father wasn’t a very educated man. He never expected me to gain a higher education degree. But my brother went on to university. Actually there were only my old brother and I in the family. I went to work full-time because they needed money at home. (Shai'on, 65)

When Sharon was asked whether she was happy with that decision, she said:

I wish I stayed on until the time I want to leave and I could have a better paid and a better position. When my brother and I were young, he wasn’t a very bright student. He was not interested in going on education. But it was me who had to leave education earlier and bring money home because of my parents. I did not reject their ideas at that time since I thought it might be a not bad idea. I think I was wrong. (Sharon, 65)

Girls’ education was not valued; parents’ family financial constraints could possibly be an important reason apart from boy preference. As another woman, Debbie aged 45, said:

I expected to go out to work to bring some money home to help my mother. I didn’t have choice at that time, I’ve got to work. Looking back I think if my parents had money to send me to a better school that would be better for me. But it wasn’t to me. Time was difficult for them.

The above findings show that in the 60s, English girls would be needed to support their family’s domestic finance if the economic situation was not good. In that sense, girls were not supposed to move on to further education regardless of their ability and willingness. Parents, usually fathers, tended to be the ones who made decisions for their children in a patriarchal
family. Children in those days followed what their parents asked them to do, particularly
daughters tended to obey their parents because of the family norm; and they were too young
to understand what could be right for them in the future.

Among the 18 interviewees, three stayed on for further education, two middle-aged women
and one older man. For example, Debra stayed on until she completed her higher education at
a polytechnic. It showed the positive impact from parents who helped their children to gain
more education at a young age. Debra reported there was encouragement from her mother for
her further education. She said:

I was thought in my mother’s eyes as a career girl. I stayed in school as long as I could. I
was nearly 19 when I left school. I like school. (Debra, 46)

When I asked her “Are you happy with this”? She continued: “I stayed as long as I could and
I am glad I stayed for that time. After school I went on to do more education”. The only man
reported that he went on to tertiary education at a young age. However, he reported there was
not that much support from his parents for his further education. Michael, aged 70, went on to
pursue a part-time technical education after a conventional engineering apprenticeship after
school. He said:

My parents were quite old, and had little understanding of educational needs. And I had
little encouragement to strive for a higher education. They thought that university was
only a place to train for the old professions, law, church, medicine, and I hadn’t the
strength to press for the slight advantage (Michael, 70)

A few points need to be clarified according to the above findings: firstly, it is possible to
interpret that girls’ education was not valued because there was a boy in the family. Secondly,
when the family’s economic situation was not good, girls tend to be the ones to go out to work
to help the family economy. As a result, the family ideology of boy’s preference did not only
impact on girls' further education but also on gender inequality itself. Thus, girls' education not being highly valued in the English family was a result from the different perspectives of their parents' social class on gender. On the macro level, as mentioned in Chapter Three, British society in the years between 1945 and 1957 was dominated by the consequences of the war. Those just reaching adulthood had spent their formative childhood years in a time when living standards were rising, but when, also, much of the country was affected by the severe economic depression. In the 1960s, there was a need for clerical, manual and professional labour which could only be fully met by using female employees. Also during this period, British society and family ideology still strangely emphasised the woman's place in the home, tinged with some acceptance of women's secondary place in the labour market. In the post-war period, middle-class girls were not expected to be too bothered about domestic skills but were encouraged to prepare for a career. Their task was to achieve academically whilst not losing their femininity; although prepared for a career, the reality was that they would probably spend more years in domestic activities than in employment. Working-class English girls in less academic schools and lower streams were not expected to prepare for work - any of the traditional semi-skilled women's jobs would do. These girls were expected to learn skills for their future domestic role, no matter that for them the reality would be a dual role, for all or at least part of their lives.

Douglas and Kahl (1965: 4) in their study indicated that 'working class children lack parental support and motivation and family pressures tend to push such children into choosing the option of work, rather than education, at the earliest possible opportunity while middle class children are encouraged to stay in school for as long as possible (even though it means parents being willing and able to support them financially)'. The authors argue that the difference between working class and middle class parental attitudes can be expressed in terms of the latter having future orientated attitudes where the former are present orientated. They continued: 'Leaving school at the earliest opportunity is a form of 'immediate
gratification', since the working class child can start to earn money at an earlier age than their middle-class peers. The ideas of 'future' and 'present' orientations stem from the different adult experiences of working and middle class parents, which they use to condition the attitudes of their off-spring' (p.5).

Although the social class of the English interviewees in this study tends to be somewhat puzzling to me due to my own different cultural background, it is still possible for me to judge their parental class from their way of speaking and the information they provided during the interviews. However, it is necessary to note that many female returnees’ current social backgrounds may be the result of upward marriage. Such social mobility could also be regarded as another significant factor and positive input to allow adult women to return to education at a later age.

In Taiwan similar results were obtained from middle aged women in terms of family attitudes and values on girls’ education. Women in Taiwan did not stay on in further education on account of boy-preference in the family, and women were not given financial support by their parents to go on to further education after school. Gender inequality was apparently experienced in the families of middle-aged women at a young age. Moreover, as in Taiwan ethnicity had by and large as significant an impact as class did among their English counterparts, middle-aged females of Taiwanese origin had parents who preferred boys’ education in the family. However, females from the younger age group and middle-aged male participants gained a far more positive impact from their parents’ attitudes and values on their further education at a young age than the middle class English adult women. Amongst the 13 interviewees, twelve respondents from Taiwan focused upon this issue that five women from the middle aged and one from the younger age groups reported their parents did not encourage their further education. By contrast, three middle aged males and three younger females reported their parents encouraged them to move on to tertiary education. One of the middle-aged women reported that girls’ education was not valued in her parents’ eyes. Fung
said:

When I was young I lived in the country. Education was not valued in my family at all. Both of my parents worked in the field. They did not have time to pay attention to my school study. Mother used to say, ‘it is not important for girls to attend education. (Fung, 52)

When I asked Fung if she was happy with that decision, she continued: ‘If my father or my brother had pushed me to study harder at that time, I would probably have carried on my study until higher education then’. The underachievement of academic performance was an important reason that gave the women participants no place to reject their parents’ suggestion not to move on to tertiary education. I shall discuss the failure of entrance examination as a structural barrier later. Parents in Taiwan may want their daughters to go on to paid work rather than undertaking further education because of failing the entrance examination or other family reasons. For example, Shui-Hui could not carry on her education not only because of her father’s attitude but also because she failed the University Joint Entrance Examination. Regarding her father’s attitude on further education, in the early days, the patriarchal family in Taiwan tended to regard daughters’ destiny as working for a few years before marrying away from home. Higher qualifications were not considered as something important for daughters if they were not going to bring their wages to their parents or establish their own future career. In the traditional Chinese extended family, sons took the responsibilities to look after their aging parents rather than the daughters. Shui-Hui said:

My parents didn’t want me to study in a place far away since they would worry about my safety. But my younger brother went on to study in Taipei after me a few years later. The main reason was we had a small-sized family business and father needed helpers at that time. When I could not reach the entrance requirement of the college in my city nearby I was immediately asked to drop out and stay at home. My parents both thought girls will get married in a few years and shall help their husband’s career then. (Shui-Hui, 54)
When I asked Shui-Hui if she was happy with that choice, she continued:

I had no choice at that time. I thought my father had chosen something good for me. I was a little envious of my younger brother at that time but when I was only 18. I followed what my father asked me to do. (Shui-Hui)

Decades later, parents' attitudes became more supportive and there was also less patriarchal dominance in the family. The younger participants reported they left their education because they failed the examination rather than discouragement from parents. In Jade’s case, the situational barriers were mixed with her psychological problems—lack of confidence. Her inferior school performance reinforced the thought as failure in future academic study. Jade (33) said:

My mother is supportive of my education and she has always wanted me to reach the highest level I could. It was my own problem not to carry on education after school. I was not in the class to prepare for academic study during my secondary education. Unsurprisingly, I failed the university joint entrance examination. I thought university is not for the types of students like me despite my parents encouraged me to study as much as possible! I was feeling a bit guilty at that time (Jade, 33).

Parents’ attitudes became positive on girls’ education; however the structural barriers, for example entrance examination, deterred the opportunities for younger women to move on toward higher education. (see the section on structural barriers). As mentioned earlier, three middle-aged males stayed on in education, three went on to professional colleges and became policemen and soldier immediately after their secondary education. These men reported they were fully supported by their parents to undertake further education. According to the information they provided during the interviews, I assume two of the three males are Mainlanders, first because their accent sounds like the Mainlander, and secondly, because
both grew up in a Mainlander community. It is possible to interpret that in Taiwan boys’
education was valued in the family regardless of their ethnicity in the 70s and 80s.
In Taiwan family ideology has been influenced by Confucianism, according to which parents
want their children to study as much as they can but boys are always the first to be educated
when a family suffers privation. Women in Taiwan, particularly of Taiwanese ethnicity, were
brought up in such family norm where the ideology of Confucianism has cemented a
patriarchal culture, which ensures men’s superiority inside and outside the family. However,
the family norm assuming boy-preference has changed over the decades. The latest study
shows that in 2000 more than 80% of parents demanded a higher education for their children,
irrespective of sex (ROC Ministry of Education, 2001:65). But the difference between the
Taiwanese and Mainlander still remains. Tsai (2003) in her recent study shows that although
boys and girls in a younger age cohort receive a more equal education than the older age
cohort, the ethnic groups of more educated children are differentiated from those with less
educated children, with girls of Taiwanese origin losing out to daughters of more privileged
fathers.

8.2.2 Partner’s and Children’s Attitudes

In the UK, amongst the 18 interviewees, 15 who have children reported the children’s attitude
toward their mother’s current learning activity as more supportive than their partner’s. This
may be because the English respondents’ children are grown up or less dependent on their
mothers. Women without children found less commitment from their husbands. Fifteen
female participants focused upon this issue where five older women and three middle-aged
women found their husbands tended to be against their current study. Two older women,
four middle-aged and one younger woman reported their husbands as quite supportive.
Women's husbands who were against their current study would probably give the following reasons: early retirement and women's leisure activities were not recognised in the household. Early retirement possibly occurred among older women while women's leisure activities became more significant for married women from their middle age onwards. The older English interviewee Karen took early retirement before she returned to learning. Her husband retired the year when she started her course at University. She reported that there was an argument about the ways of structuring their retired life. Karen always wanted to be involved in a learning activity; however, her husband did not. During the interview, Karen described the situation in a slightly resentful tone since she found her retired husband had nothing to do in the house but was a little envious when she went out every morning to spend time in the library or was reading the books at home. She said:

My partner is retired and he found it more difficult. I have found so much to do. He retired before I started this course. He was 62 when he was retired. He had a quite high position job. He just wants to be relaxed and with doing nothing in daily structure. He doesn't understand why I have to be in a different sort of life and this life is for me. (Karen, 60)

Another woman Janet, aged 57, reported at the beginning of the interview:

My children grew up and my husband is very supportive, I am really lucky. I kept working full-time and part-time since I got married and had children. Now my children grew up and I think it should be my turn to study. My children are lovely they were very pleased when they knew I enrolled a degree programme at university. They are completely supportive to my returning to learn, same as my husband. They are lovely family. (Janet, 57)

But later she expressed a different view and revealed her husband's suspicion on her current learning without career leading purposes. She told me that her husband has a successful career outside but would love to have her company as he usually did. She did not find it easy to face
her husband’s demands when she was busy for her university field trip or writing up assignments: her husband showed his discomfort sometimes in an ironical way. She once thought her husband’s doubt were probably caused by the change in the family schedule because of her university study:

If I am not with my husband when he goes to competition he usually asks where I am. If I am here (at University) then next day he says, ‘why are you doing that? You don’t need to do that! You’re not going to get a job, are you?’ (Jane, 57)

In Jane’s husband’s eyes learning leads to the preparation for the next vocation, however, Jane regarded her current study as a hobby of enjoying pure learning. The change of responses from Jane’s husband may be interpreted as ‘face keeping’ since adult people may not feel comfortable to mention something from their private aspect at the beginning of an interview. The similar reaction of ‘face keeping’ may occur amongst women from Taiwan, although none have found from the interviews in this study. Moreover, it is worthy to compare how the Taiwanese husbands view the learning activities when it leads to a hobby of enjoying pure learning rather than the preparation for the next vocation. I shall discuss this later on. Women in the family, due to their roles as mother and housewife, are more often to be ‘the servicers, providers and spectators of the leisure of others within the family than participants in activities responding to their own interests, preferences or needs’ (Wimbush, 1988). There is a concern (McGivney, 1993a: 18): ‘Where there were conflicts between the demands or needs of family members and the mothers’ outside commitments, it was generally the women’s leisure that was cut back or dropped’. However, women in this study found a different way to continue with their learning activity if there were conflicts in the house. Debbie had problems with her partner because of the use of the family car but the problem was solved when they bought a second car. Debbie said:
Initially my husband objected to my field trips. It was not just the field trip that my husband objected to. It was anything that involved my being out on a Saturday. Mostly this was because we only had one car. He refused to get up and drive me to the University so he could have the car. Instead he chose to let me have the car and then gave me a hard time when I returned because he had been stuck in the house all day with no car. Where we live a car is absolutely necessary. We now have a second car - so the problem should not arise in the future. (Debbie, 47)

Again, McGivney (1993a) found barrier is frequently exposed when mothers seek to participate in any activity, interest or employment outside the home which is not related to their domestic role and which entails some change to the domestic routine. At this point, some women experience resistance from male partners and other family members. Many consequently abandon their outside interests for the sake of family peace and comfort (p. 17). However, it can possibly be overcome by using a strategy. Debbie described her absence during the weekend for a period of time as possibly causing a change of schedule in the family. Instead of having a conflict with her husband every day, Debbie decided to remove the conflict in order to keep her study schedule running smoothly. Edwards (1993) tends to use the word ‘strategy’ in the belief that women are more concerned with fulfilling conflicting demands and coping in a much more spontaneous way.

Women with a supportive husband were also cited by respondents in this study. But the findings show that the younger and middle-aged women tend to have a more supportive husband than their older counterparts. The meaning of “support” could be expressed to women in material ways by helping with housework and taking care of children. Yet the psychological and emotional supports could appear as more valuable symbols of their partner’s support. Rachel, aged 33, reported her husband wanted to return to university, too. However, they decided that she should study first, then he will start his degree courses when she has completed hers.

Compared with their English counterparts, different results were obtained about adult women
from Taiwan. There, the findings show married women in their 40s and 50s whose husbands tend to be against women's current studies while married women in their 30s possibly have a supportive husband. By contrast, men in Taiwan tend to have more supportive wives who accommodate their husbands' wishes. As for their children's attitudes in the UK, all the respondents reported that their children are supportive of their current study. However, in Taiwan, children's attitude to their mother's/father's education tends to be neutral or unfavourable at the beginning. This may be because the younger children tend to be less independent due to their young age and other personal reasons when their mother or sometimes father is involved in a learning activity. One male reported his children dislike his study at university; however, none of the adult mother students reported their children as not supportive of their study.

Children or partners may not be supportive of their parents' education because the adult classes at university, in Taiwan, take place mostly in the evenings or weekends when family and children are gathered together in the house. However fewer higher education institutions have daytime class schedules to meet the needs of mothers with dependent children. Reasons could be (1), the University Joint Entrance Examinations restricts adult students; (2), the traditional university classes still favoured 18-years-old students and adult students would be reluctant to attend; (3), of the adult students who return to learning for personal pleasure or professional qualifications, those who favour personal pleasure may possibly go to other adult education classes and those who seek professional qualifications may target their needs for further full-time occupations. This shows that flexible class schedules offered by higher education institutions for adult participants from different age cohorts are still not sufficient or are still far beyond the needs of adult women students in Taiwan.

Adult mother students tried not to affect family life, particularly children's school schedule, as Liou said:
I do not want their daily lives to be affected because of my study at University. Meanwhile University offers a widely flexible programme which meets my requirements in terms of timetable, that’s why I am here. (Liou, 38)

Similarly the middle-aged adult student Fung returned to learning with the support of her children. Fung is in her fifties with young adult children. She was the top student in her university class and received a scholarship from her mother’s working place. Her family and children support her study and she works very hard. As a single parent, Fung wanted to become a role model in the family for their adolescence. Fung, aged 52, lost her husband twenty years ago. Her son was preparing for the University Joint Entrance Examination the moment she returned to study. She said:

I have a stable job in the Agricultural Trust with which I can survive on my own. I left school at age 16 because I did not want to continue education. I now realised I was wrong. When I saw my children, they worried a lot. I did not want them to follow the same mistakes I did before. I always told them to study more and study harder. Studying became a burden in my age not only mentally but also physically. One of my children is about the age to go to university but the others were not very keen on study. My husband passed away many years ago. I wish he were here and guided my daughters and son. I did not want people to think they are useless children because they grew up in a single parent family. So I want my returning to university to become a role model to inspire my son and two daughters. I hope they will study harder too. (Fung, 52)

Another young adult participant, Soong, expressed the same feeling:

I hope my children are influenced by me because I am learning in HE. Reading is one of my habits and I want it to become the habit of my children. (Soong, 34)

Adult women students in Taiwan, regardless of age, tend to become the role model of their children’s education when returning to higher education.

Other women participants reported their return to university has changed their relationship
with the children. Soong and Su-Zu also reported their current study has brought them closer
to their children; what they have learned benefits their family life as they described:

I like to use the knowledge I learnt at school in raising my children. I would like to see
more interaction between my children and me. It makes me enjoy learning more. (Soong,
34)

Su-Zu said:

My study at University helps me understand more the stress that my children are feeling
from their schools. (Su-Zu, 54)

Three males focused on the issue of having a supportive spouse. All are married and in their
40s, and reported their wives as very supportive of their education. As many adult classes in
Taiwan take place during the weekends, at the beginning of the course, Rich described it was
difficult to let his wife and children understand why he cannot be home and has to study
during the weekends. He said:

I have to go to the classes during the weekends when I used to spend time with my three
children. They asked me why I had to go to school when even they did not need to go at
the weekends. But now they are very supportive. (Rich, 41)

The above findings show male respondents from Taiwan tend to receive more support from
their wives than wives will possibly gain from their husbands except for the younger women.
It can be seen that in a modern society like Taiwan remain women to fulfil their roles as
mother and housewife who devote all their time and energy to the needs of the family, take
responsibility for their family obligations and accommodate their husbands' wishes in
behaviour. Will the situation be the same for our mother students? When Rich was asked if he
will equally support his wife, he said:
If my wife has done her housework and has got the children fed, she could go out and do things she likes to do for her hobbies. (Rich, 41)

Taiwanese men in their 40s tend to require their wives to fulfil their ‘duties as a good wife’ in the house before women start to do things for themselves. The interpretation could be the family ideology where these middle-aged men grew up: woman’s place is supposed to be inside the home and it could be what their mother did at home when they were young. The respondent Wen, aged 31, married but as yet without children, reported her husband supports her returning to learning but with an odd reason: ‘My husband supports my education because he is afraid I would be pregnant if I have nothing to do in the house. Gender equality for most men seems to remain the stereotype in which women should fulfil their duties as wife or mother despite having a paid job outside the home. The younger women may gain more support from their husbands compared with their mothers’ generation; however, the gender stereotype remained in most of the males regardless of age. It showed that equality between men and women in the family structure in Taiwan has not progressed as fast as its economic development in the past few decades despite the nuclear family having replaced the stem and extended families as the most common pattern, and many couples opting not to have children. The above results show women tend to be very supportive of their husband’s education at university. However it depends on the individual situation of the husband about women’s returning to education. The younger women tend to have a more supportive husband compared with their middle-aged counterparts. Women respondents, from both countries, expressed that the knowledge gained from school has inspired them to educate their children and helped to change the relations between parents and children.
8.2.3 Lack of Time

Time constraints are shown in many studies as one of the major barriers for female adults returning to education. The same applies in this study. In the UK, amongst the 18 interviewees, fifteen women focused on this issue where two older women, ten middle-aged women and three younger women reported they lacked time to come to study at university. As the findings showed, by and large the middle aged women with dependent children were concerned whether they would be able to cope with their university timetable and children's school schedule. The younger participants worry about whether they can handle their paid employment and university study at the same time. Also, lack of time is mentioned among older adults although many of them are retired; yet older adults may still be combining their study with part-time work. And these older people tend to organise their daily life with other activities, too. As older participants reported, they have grown up children and grandchildren come to stay with them during the weekends. Others may participate in hobbies like painting, meeting friends, community work or travelling. Returning to learn at university may possibly enrich their daily schedule. The older woman, Sandra, aged 55, who still works part-time while she is undertaking her study at university said:

"I found it quite busy because I still work a couple of days a week so it's quite tiring dropping out of all life and getting the homework done. (Sandra, 55)"

The male participant Michael, in his 70s, reported he travels widely which may allow him less time available to come to study at University. For English older participants in this study, the time obstacle possibly occurred because they had scheduled their time for other events such as part-time work, the visits of relatives and engaging in other social or adult classes. Consequently, time constraint is mentioned in a completely different way among the
middle-aged women with dependent children, mainly because their family commitments tend to give women participants a tight schedule to cope with the family and their university study. Usually women participants were hoping their family schedule could be maintained when they studied at university. Woman participants may feel stressed when they struggled between family life and homework during the holidays, as Katy said:

I have got children, I don’t read that much. Like writing up the assignment, a lot of work I have to hand in during Christmas when there are ten days. I got children so I don’t read that much during the holiday. (Katy, 47)

Time constraints may not be simply regarded as a situational barrier since the participant’s own feelings may have an impact and result in more anxiety on returning to learning. A similar situation was shown above from mother respondent Katy. Also, single parents with unstable part-time paid work may cause dispositional barriers on returning to learning. Being a lone mother has the pressure of family economics and taking care of the children. Thus lone mothers tended to encounter situational and dispositional barriers at the same time. Furthermore, the psychological barrier resulting from earlier negative learning experiences may enhance a woman’s anxiety on undertaking the study now in terms of time. Debbie is concerned about her time management and the possible negative results if she failed to have good time management. In other words, she is concerned about the stability of her income which supports all her daily expenses. Leaving her negative previous learning experiences aside, she seemed concerned not to let her paid employment be affected by her university study, and vice versa. She said:

I wondered what the effect would be on my family and my employers. It would be a huge undertaking and lots of give and take would be required on all sides. Also if I lost my job, I would not be able to continue with the course and I could not cope with failing to complete for the third time. (Debbie, 45)
McGivney (1990) indicated the obstacle frequently mentioned by adults in American and British surveys is lack of time for participating in education, constraints arising from family responsibilities and work schedule, and this is cited particularly by unskilled workers and young mothers. Debbie’s situation was reinforced by what was found in earlier studies. The factor of time poverty means that the participants have imposed on them a daily life structure that combines university study, childcare, family commitments, as well as, in some cases, paid employment. It also can be seen as a structural barrier that deterred women’s returning to education because the picture emerged of women running to keep up with all the demands on their lives. Marion Bowl (2001) interpreted the problem of time management to be more of a structural issue than a personal issue - linked to poverty itself and to gendered assumptions about the responsibility of women to be home managers and child carers as well as breadwinners.

Compared with their English counterparts, Taiwanese respondents showed similar results in terms of time constraints. Among the 13 interviewees, ten focused upon the issues where eight middle aged women and men and five younger women reported they were concerned about the timetable. The reasons for time obstacles are similar to their English counterparts, that middle-aged women and men are concerned about their children’s school schedule and their university study while the younger participants are more concerned about their paid job and university study. Shi-Yu, aged 38 with two dependent school children, came to study when her children were at school. She had to leave her class and pick up her children from school by 4pm. Her experiences are similar to the English mother-students who face the dilemma of coping with both the family schedule and school schedule at the same time. She said: ‘I had to be aware of my children’s schedule. I do not want their daily lives to be affected because of my study at University’. Middle-aged women with teenagers at home showed the concerns of a mother in terms of their children’s education. In many families in
Taiwan the mother still takes the main responsibility for their children's daily life. It can be interpreted partly by the nature of a mother's duty and partly because the children incline to be distant with their working fathers. This is commonly seen in the traditional family which consists of a full-time mother and a breadwinner father. Full-time mothers feel guilty when their schedule is distracted into several parts as they cannot provide as much attention as they used to do. Soong said:

My children are in their young adulthood. I spent less time to mentor their study as I usually did before because of I have a hectic time for my own study in HE. Recently I started to be concerned about the way my children deal with their study. They do not care about other things that are also important for them in their life. I am more worried about the way they develop their personality than their study. (Soong, 34)

There is a difficulty for adult women students in terms of time management while mother student Soong also complained about the tight schedule of her school study. She carried on:

I found I have a very tight schedule for my study. I have little time to review my study while I am working at daytime and dealing with housework.

Not only mother respondents but also the men were concerned about the time issue. Three male participants stated the issues; the middle-aged father student Rich reported like the mother respondent Soong:

At the beginning my wife and children could not understand why I have to go to school even during the weekends. There was a hard time for all of us. Now they have understood and got used to not having me with them in the house during the weekends. (Rich, 41)

Time issues are not only a concern for the family or children but also for the attitude of employers and office schedules. Initially Rich was not supported by his supervisor at the
My supervisor from the office did not support me to return to learn. I had promised him for keeping up my routine job well then he would allow me to come back to learn in College.

Similarly, another man, Hu, reported he had adjusted his working schedule in order to continue his university study, but showed he has supportive colleagues in the office:

I talked to my supervisor about studying in university, because I don't want my study to be affected by the daily job. I have to leave my office earlier to catch the first school class, so I work extra hours during lunch break to finish the work of each day. My supervisor and colleagues are quite understanding, especially when something urgent happened at work. (Hu, 45)

For younger Taiwanese interviewees, time constraints meant they have had to reschedule their paid work and university study. The younger adults reported they returned to gain a higher education and to get a better job after completion, therefore, the types of jobs they were involved in at the moment tended to be time-consuming and less rewarding. This made the time issue even worse when the school schedules were added. On the other hand, the dispositional barrier may also emerge with the situational barriers in the sense that adult participants may have gained less confidence on the completion of their current study due to their previous negative experience of academic performance.

For further details see the section on dispositional barriers.

8.2.4 Childcare

Childcare is mentioned occasionally among the Taiwanese respondents but not among their English counterparts, possibly because due to the age of the younger participants from the UK,
childcare was not an essential event for them, as it was for participants in Taiwan. In Taiwan, 6 out of 13 interviewees all from the middle-aged group focused on this issue. The respondents reported that they have someone else in the family to help look after their children while they are studying at university. It is mainly the wives of adult students who take the child care responsibility while the grandparents are the alternatives. The male participants in this study showed they were willing to look after the children if their wives had other commitments. There was not mentioned amongst adult participants with dependent children of preferring send their children to professional carers such as a nanny or nursery rather than to relatives. This may be because the cost of professional child carers is expensive, which may become a financial burden for the families where the father is the only breadwinner. On the other hand, many adult respondents simply prefer finding someone else, particularly grandparents or other relatives to professional childcare. It also showed that in Taiwan adult women participants tend to take the responsibility of childcare upon themselves despite the family structure towards to nuclear family pattern. The latest statistical report found that 72.3% of Taiwanese women aged 16-64 look after their 3 years old and younger child on their own, while 20.7% have older parents or other relatives who take care of their child. Only 6.53% of Taiwanese women send their child to nursery or paid nanny (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, 2000) (see also Chapter Seven).

8.2.5 Financial Obstacles

In the UK, all the adult interviewees reported that they paid the fees themselves except two middle-aged women who requested a student loan. The younger adults reported they needed to apply for a loan to support their living as their part-time wages could only pay off the bills.
It is possible to interpret that financial difficulties seem to be a more serious burden for younger adults than their older counterparts in the UK. However, it has to be mentioned that the older participants in this study came from wealthy households despite their personal incomes being low. This was because they had been housewives for most of their lives and the financial resources mainly depended on their husbands (see Chapter Seven). In the UK financial difficulties for younger adult returnees may also include the add-on costs (books, equipment, examination fees, registration fees), direct personal and family support costs while undertaking education, childcare costs and transport costs. For the majority of English participants in this study, financial circumstances have improved largely compared with their early schooling when the family was poor after the post-war period and unable to support their education.

In Taiwan, all participants are self-funded except one middle-aged woman who received a scholarship from her mother’s working place. The results are similar to their English counterparts: women participants whose personal income is not high but whose household income by and large is comfortable (see Chapter Seven). Besides, adult participants with either full or part-time work tend to be able to afford the fees and living expenses. However, the cultural impact is encouraging learning activities that are greatly valued by the Confucian ideology, more than any other activities in life, and people tend to regard this as an investment as part of the human capital. When the situational barrier is removed, the family economic situation would be improved but the barriers may still be encountered amongst younger adults particularly by those participants holding a low paid and unrewarding job. In contrast to their older English counterparts, the types of programmes the respondents were attending are often professional subjects that will lead adult participants toward future advanced jobs.

The above findings show that adult participants in Taiwan tend to engage on a programme that will lead to a further career and this may make the participants feel more inclined to pay for their learning activity despite their current financial situation not being strong. English
participants are mainly involved in a liberal study for personal interest, and the older and middle-aged participants are now able to afford the cost of study. Financial constraints will possibly occur among the younger adults from both countries, those who are unemployed or adults with disabilities.

In Part Two I shall compare and analyse the dispositional barriers that were cited frequently among the adult participants in this study.

8.3 Part Two: Dispositional barriers

It is suggested that dispositional factors - attitudes, perceptions, expectations - constitute perhaps the most powerful deterrents to participation among the groups investigated. In Part One I compared and analysed the situational barriers encountered by adult respondents in this study. It seems there is a strong consensus that the obstacles result from the combination and interaction of diverse factors, rather than one or two obstacles that would be relatively easy to overcome. For the participants in this research, lack of confidence in their current study often existed and they reported that the dispositional barriers were overcome through their progress over the years. That was one reason why there were more dispositional outcomes cited than barriers, regardless of country. This is also because at the time of the interviews many of the participants were in their second or third year of study at university. It showed that through a year of learning experiences they found that more dispositional outcomes had been achieved despite the lack of confidence that still remained and was reported by the participants in both nations. Therefore the process of learning has more positive impacts on these people, not only intellectually but also psychologically. Positive outcomes include, such as, self-confidence, self-fulfilment and self-development are the most commonly cited by the respondents. On the other hand, these positive psychological inputs were actually the results of the crises
encountered by the participants. Reigal (1975) suggests ‘crisis’ should be viewed as inevitable, and on a continuum with terms such as stability and balance, not in opposition. Hence the dispositional outcomes achieved by the participants after their return to learning will be compared and analysed and this will provide the reader with a different window to examine the dispositional barriers which the participants have overcome. 

Again, later I will address the issue on adult participants who feel self-fulfilled and of those who have regrets after their participation in higher education. The feeling of self-fulfilment did not only result in reconstruction of self-confidence during the process of study but also the being a satisfied mother in the home. Their differing views in terms of self-fulfilment and regrets after they returned to learn in higher education, will be examined later.

Next I move on to compare and analyse why adult participants reported a lack of confidence and if there is a difference between the middle-class and working-class participants in the UK. And is there a difference between returnees in the two countries?

### 8.3.1 Lack of Confidence

Many studies on adult returnees show lack of confidence as a common psychological factor among participants. In this study in the UK amongst 18 interviewees there are four focused on this issue. Two middle-aged females and one older woman reported their lack of confidence. The term ‘lack of confidence’ is usually interpreted as the result of lack of intellectual skills, unfamiliarity with the academic environment and the sexist attitudes women encounter at all levels of society. This gives women a poor self-concept and a lower estimation of their own worth and abilities (McGivney, 1993b: 29). Apart from the reasons above, the gap of years since their previous academic study should not be ignored, particularly for older and middle aged participants since many of them left school at age 16 or 17. However, from the first
impression I gained from these participants, older and middle aged, I could hardly categorise them as lacking in confidence. On the contrary, these women looked confident and they knew exactly what they looked for from their return to learning. This could possibly be the result from their life experiences and upward mobility. But when the topics in the interviews moved on to their academic learning experiences, the women started to wonder if their learning experiences were different from the others’ or similar. If they were similar to others’ answers they may consider themselves as ‘normal’. This kind of psychological reaction appeared particularly among the middle class participants in the English institutions. These women looked confident but not from the academic aspect. Yet they reported they gained more self-confidence through the progress of learning. For example, Sandra, aged 55, said:

I am probably not feeling confident to share my opinions with other people in the classes. As the course went up I got better. (Sandra, 55)

Age may not be the only reason in terms of lacking of confident: a similar situation occurred with a middle-aged respondent. Adult participants who had never been involved in academic learning would suffer more negative impacts psychologically. Beverly said:

I felt that I did not have the academic ability to go to university. (Beverly, 38)

Compared with their middle class counterparts, the working class participants reacted confidently, particularly the middle-aged women. But their self-confidence was backed up by different types of life expectations caused by their involvement in current learning. For them, returning to learn provided working class women with an opportunity to look for self-identity which was not discovered by them before returning to learning. Louise said:
I was engaged at 18 then I got married. The major plan of my life would be to take care of my two children. I used to fall into the type of thoughts that I would spend most of my time in marriage until I went to the Access. I do see that I need something else. Something could give the ‘identity of me’. (Louise, 46)

As mentioned earlier, situational barriers such as time constraints also possibly integrate with dispositional barriers like ‘lack of confidence’. The English participant Debbie was also concerned she may not be able to cope mentally, apart from time constraints. She said:

I had got out of the studying mode and was concerned about whether I would be able to hold my own with other students, would I be able to string together a coherent essay, or would I be able to complete an exam for the first time in 32 years. I still have nagging doubts about whether I will be able to cope despite the fact that I have managed the first year satisfactorily. (Debbie, 45)

Debbie seemed to be different from other English participants by and large in this study in terms of dispositional outcomes. It is possible to interpret that Debbie may expect a further upgrade on her part-time jobs after completing her degree immediately after school education. In the meantime it might cause her more anxiety. She worried whether she answered the questions ‘properly’ and ‘sufficiently’. McClelland (1961) conducted research into achievement motivation based on differences between a need to achieve on the one hand, and a need to avoid failure on the other. Mercer and Saunders (2004) further explained that participants displayed ambition and hope about gaining a higher education qualification, whilst at the same time showing a concern about failing course work and examination assessments. They typically related feelings of anxiety about their academic ability before they started the Access course, in the early stages of their Access studies and then again during the first year of university.

In Taiwan, different results were found compared with their English counterparts in terms of lack of confidence. Amongst the 13 interviewees, 10 focused on this issue. Six middle-aged
women and men and one younger woman reported they lacked confidence. It showed there were more respondents reporting they lacked confidence compared with the English participants. According to the findings adults felt less confident because of the type of courses they were undertaking. It showed the group of participants in Taiwan who majored in Applied English tended to report they lacked confidence in terms of speaking English. This was not found with other participants whose subjects were not English. For example, Fung aged 52, said: 'I have to spend more time to memorize English vocabulary'. Compared with their older counterparts, fewer younger participants found they lacked confidence. For those who did, their previous learning experiences may possibly have resulted in a negative impression of their current study. Wang, aged 36, said: 'I am afraid of (learning) a foreign language although English helps me to enlarge my view'. The above findings show that the type of subject and previous learning experiences caused the respondents from Taiwan more anxiety than any other psychological reasons. They reported they lacked confidence regardless of age and ethnicity.

8.3.2 Dispositional Outcomes

In the UK, self-confidence is one of the major positive impacts amongst the 18 interviewees. Fourteen focused on this issue: four older women, eight middle-aged and two younger women reported they became more confident through their progress. There was significant impact on older and middle-aged female interviewees who gained self-esteem from their return to learning. The result from younger participants was similar but less significant. It can be seen that there is a link between academic progression and the sense of self-development regardless of age cohorts. This growth in self-confidence can be viewed as a major outcome for adult participants returning to education in this study. One middle-aged interviewee,
Debra, described how she grew with the progress of learning:

I became more confident in my own ability to do self-research, that was the area I am not very good at. I have enjoyed the chalk and talk but I was not very good with researching things by myself so I hope to be a more independent learner by the end of study. (Debra, 46)

Adult participants realised they are equipped with appropriate skills to cope with the academic demands of their course through progress during the crucial period. Sharon said:

I certainly already got more confidence because this is the end of my second year. I have to get one of two presentations which I did find is terrifying. But the second time was less terrifying than the first time. Besides, everybody else is doing it, too. I think I have grown already. (Sharon, 65)

In a recent study, Mercer and Saunders (2004: 297) found the successful negotiation of these conflicts facilitate development not just in a strictly academic sense, but also in terms of general development by providing a more positive sense of self. Many adult participants have proved they are completely fulfilled through progress, and self-fulfilment to them is not simply seeking qualification but approaching the goal of life that they have always wanted to achieve. In the UK, amongst the 18 interviewees ten focused on this outcome: six older women, three middle-aged women and one younger woman reported the outcome of self-fulfilment. It shows there is a strong influence on older age participants in terms of personal fulfilment. This can be seen partly because the respondents selected the subjects they are interested in and partly because they underwent the process and have proved their brain is still working. One older interviewee, Sharon, said:

I am only interested in part-time and art history. I hope to go on in six years and get my degree not for any reason except a lot of learning. I think it will give me a lot of satisfaction but I will be 70 by then. I am not going to start a new career. (Sharon, 65)
Sharon showed the pure personal satisfaction she has gained through the process of learning. It also motivated an older person to be more active in their later life. Dench and Regan (2000) in their study about motivations and impacts on older participants indicated 80% of older learners reported a positive impact of learning on at least one of the following areas: their enjoyment of life; their self-confidence; how they felt about themselves; satisfaction with other areas of life; and their ability to cope.

The middle-aged participants may reach the level of self-fulfilment in terms of personal attitude changes towards other members of the family. Returning to education has changed their way of thinking and this led them, usually mothers and housewives, to gain a more positive outcome in their family life. The dispositional outcomes influenced the situational barrier in terms of personal attitude and probably vice versa. Self-fulfilment for younger adults means something different for other age cohorts. Stephanie, aged 28, said: ‘To do things I want to do not for others’. Self-fulfilment tends to be the freedom of a young person to dominate his/her life. And the degree of freedom thus enlarged possibly resulted from the increased opportunities in education and jobs in the past few decades. This will be further discussed later in terms of self-fulfilment.

In Taiwan, the results are similar to their English counterparts but the age cohorts tend to be younger. Amongst the 13 interviewees, ten focused on the outcome of self-esteem leading to self-satisfaction. Three middle aged women and one younger adult reported their self-confidence increased through the progress. Middle aged interviewee Wang said: ‘I have become more confident now. I understand more from the content of courses and I am able to express my own ideas and ask questions if there is something I do not understand’. Also Fung, aged 52, who majored in Applied English: ‘I am more confident in speaking English now.’ For those people self-confidence occurred after progress in learning. Making progress in a language is something quite obvious to see but may be difficult to reach.

Others may interpret self-confidence into different aspects of lives, for example
Mei-Foun, aged 42, said: 'I feel like having a new life now. It seems nothing has cheered me up so much for a very long time. I know it is a kind of self-satisfaction'. Similar to their English counterparts, there is a link between self-confidence and self-development among middle-aged and younger participants, both women and men, in Taiwan. The male respondent Hu expressed the ideal of self-fulfilment as having helped him to prove being someone useful as a man of his age. He said:

I came to learn not for the degree or an advanced job. I simply enjoy learning itself. And the self-fulfilment I have gained throughout the process of learning. I am going to be in my second year this coming September, and I have already proved I am someone still useful. (Hu, 45)

Not only middle-aged participants found that the feelings of proving to be useful are important: so did the younger adults in Taiwan. It is possible to see that academic achievement has been equally important for both middle-aged and younger adults even if the reasons encouraging them to reach this stage may be different. For middle-aged participants, life needs change because of the stability they have gained over the years of youth. Participants in their 40s and 50s have reached the point at which they would like to achieve something else apart from their routine work before they become too old to do so. For younger adults, self-satisfaction could result from the academic achievement which they were not able to reach at an earlier time. Dai-Wei said:

I plan to finish this study at University in five years, then I can prove I am someone who is capable to do a degree study, by the time I would be much more confident about presenting myself. (Dai-Wei, 31)

Although the adult participants mentioned that self-confidence led to self-development people look for different outcomes depending on their age. Self-fulfilment is a major and
positive impact reported by both English and Taiwanese respondents. However, as mentioned earlier self-satisfaction was found in the younger age range of 30-50 years in Taiwan compared with the respondents aged 55 and above in the UK. It is possible to interpret this firstly that the majority of older respondents in this study are English and the majority of Taiwanese respondents belong to the younger and middle-aged cohorts (see Chapter Seven). Secondly, the opportunities may possibly not have opened up for English older participants until recent years while the middle and younger Taiwanese participants have now caught up. There is an implication that Taiwan came through rapid changes economically and socially which have given the younger and middle aged participants more opportunities in education. It took a longer journey for English older adults to gain such opportunities then.

Apart from self-fulfilment, knowledge acquisition is another important outcome mentioned frequently by the participants in the UK and Taiwan. However, Taiwanese respondents have inclined more towards an advanced career; English respondents tend to express the idea how much they have enjoyed the pure learning, rather than use the type of knowledge for personal career advance. In the UK, amongst the 18 interviewees, four focused on the knowledge acquisition in terms of further career, while eight reported this amongst the 13 interviewees in Taiwan. In the UK, those tending to have an advanced job are in their middle age and early 30s who have known what type of job they have always wanted to do but due to lack of qualifications cannot do so. For example, Kathy said:

I really wanted to get a better job and better money. So I decided to go back to education. I definitely want to go to do PGCE I definitely wanted to teach primary school. It’s been long time I have said that. Never mind! (Kathy, 46)

In Taiwan, the career leading purpose tends to appear among the younger participants as they may need knowledge of foreign languages for a future job they are interested in.

Pure learning is regarded as a meaningful outcome among older and middle-aged
participants regardless of gender and country. As English interviewee Debra, aged 46, said: ‘Any classes I do here because I want to be here, not because I have to be here. Personally I’ve always enjoying learning’. And one older male interviewee Michael, aged 70, said: ‘I am doing it purely for my own satisfaction and delight’. It is possible to say that advanced career intention had not occurred to these participants as in the real world it is difficult for older participants and middle-aged females, particularly housewives, to return to the job market after their study. Similarly, the middle-aged Taiwanese respondents, both men and women, look for personal enjoyment from their current learning activity. The type of course and the number of classes all allow these participants to extend their enjoyment of learning. Mei-Foun said:

I only took one option when I just came to University. I add one more option each semester. Now I talk to my close girl friends to come to study in University because I really enjoy my student life now. (Mei-Foun, 42)

And one male interviewee, Hu, aged 45, has spread the knowledge he gained from the classes into his family life, since he has a teenage son at home and intends to help more youngsters in his community later on. He said: ‘I come to learn because I enjoy learning the knowledge about adolescents’.

8.3.3 Self-fulfilment from Being a Parent and a Wife

Women’s participation in education has brought them into discussion about the role of being a mother and housewife. Some women students, sometimes even male students, look at the word “self-fulfilment” as being a mother/father and housewife/househusband and they tend to be actively negotiated/compromised between their family lives and university study. In the
UK, 15 out of 18 interviewees focused on this issue, and three from the younger group, 8 from the middle-aged and 4 from older group reported, they felt self-fulfilled because of being a mother of their children. Janet said:

I don’t think I would be the fulfilled person if I hadn’t been able to be a mum. We did a lot with our children when they were young. We’ve done a lot together as a family. It’s been the most fulfilling experience in my life; being a mother; being lucky to have three daughters and a son. (Janet, 56)

Similarly the middle-aged mother student Debra showed she was completed fulfilled being the mother of her children:

I enjoy being a mother because it’s a creative world, I enjoy the friendship of my children. I enjoy their different personalities, I enjoy the relationship they have with each other as well as with me. I felt very proud to be a mother of the fulfilment they’ve given to me and I feel privileged to have children. (Debra, 46)

The older respondents, Sharon and Michael, who have grown-up children and still feel content with the role of mother/ father, said:

Tremendous pride and love you have which are greater than anything I think in the world. The constant interest, I got far more interesting things than I do myself to me. (Sharon, 65)

I’d like to see my children develop, (and as a father, I did). The other thing about being a father is that you can become a grandfather, and get all the pleasures of being a parent, without the worries. (Michael, 70)

It showed self-fulfilment resulting from parenthood was not the privilege only for mothers as fathers such as the above older respondent Michael expressed the similar feelings.
By contrast, other respondents showed parenting cannot make women or even men satisfied nowadays in terms of self-fulfilment. Karen said:

I suppose there are some women find family and children totally fulfilling. I have the feeling becoming more and more rare because I think there's quite a lot of pressure in our society for everybody to be an individual to find out what they want to do. (Karen, 60)

Although Sharon reported earlier she was satisfied from her parenthood, she explained it would cause negative impacts on women if it has gone too far:

Motherhood is fulfilling most of their needs in the family but not all, and I think it's very dangerous they fulfilled because my mother was like that. We were everything to her, and that would be terrible burden to children. So I deliberately keep myself apart to that extent, that's another reason really in the background why I'm doing this study. (Sharon, 65)

Another woman showed her hesitation between the two different roles in terms of self-fulfilment. Debbie said:

Some women prefer to stay at home with children whilst others prefer to pursue a high-flying career. I would not feel any differently towards either woman. In fact I would envy both of them for different reasons. I personally need more than marriage and children to fulfil my needs, but that does sometimes make me feel that I am a bad wife/mother. (Debbie, 47)

The adult male respondent indicated women nowadays should not rely on their husband, Michael said:

It's hardly safe for a woman to rely on the support of a husband in these times since many marriages and relationships fail nowadays. (Michael, 70)
From a man’s view, women should be more independent than they used to be, and this opinion is echoed by adult women like Lisa who said:

Anyone (almost) can have children without too much thought or effort. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to have an interesting, worthwhile and fulfilling career. I would not like to have overlooked this opportunity. (Lisa, 42)

Similarly in Taiwan, amongst 13 interviewees, six focused on this issue: three each from middle-aged and younger age cohorts agreed being a mother makes their lives fulfilled, however, it must be something they wanted for their lives, as middle-aged mother student Soong said:

I think women should follow their own wishes to meet their own needs in life, although bringing up children is something also important to women. (Soong, 34)

Soong suggested that women tended to be more capable to handle the problems inside the marriage compared with their male counterparts because of the nature of their inner beings. She carried on:

I think men look stronger because physically they are stronger than women. But the inner beings of women are stronger than men’s. When women deal with marriage, women have the talent to behave rationally and emotionally. If the return to education is something women wanted to fulfil their inner being, once this purpose has been accomplished, women become stronger. (Soong)

Similarly, the middle-aged woman Liou reported, full-time mothers tended to gain self-fulfilment from bringing up their children, however, the “empty nest” syndrome tends to easily bring in negative impacts on women’s family life. To avoid such syndrome occurring Liou suggested women needed to enlarge their private lives before they have reached this stage:
Most mothers gain self-satisfaction by taking care of their children when they are still young. By the time when their children grow up and move out from parents’ house, the mother needs a plan for her own life. If she wants to keep her children with her all the time, she becomes a burden to her children. The best way to be a happy mother is to look for her personal interests at an earlier stage. (Liou, 38)

‘Can your return to study cure the syndrome of empty nest?’ I asked her. She replied: ‘I believe each person has a different taste of life. Study may not be the only way out for the others but for me, yes.’ Again I asked ‘does the syndrome happen for women more than for men?’ She denied this and reported men may have similar problems:

I don’t think this type of issue only happens to mothers, fathers may also encounter similar problems. (Liou)

Not everyone is clear about what they want to replace in life after being a full-time mother or a housewife for long and particularly when their children have grown up. It was interesting to learn the response made by Kuo (42) who did not regard her returning to education as the shift of life goal:

I think there must be something else which is important to women but I don’t know what it is. When my children are growing up, I feel there must be something else important in my life that I need to find out what it is like. But the searching for a new goal in life does not link with the reason why I am studying at University. (Kuo, 42)

It can be interpreted that for middle-aged women such as Kuo their participation in education has not fully reached the idea of self-fulfilment. It is possible because for most women “return to education” means the goals “leading to a future career” or “looking for personal pleasure”, but those women who are still searching for a new life goal and still feeling uncertain about what they seek to make themselves self-fulfilled, come to study at university first. 
However, different views showed up when three out of 13 focused on this issue and two women and one man, all from the middle aged cohort, reported their lives cannot be fulfilled by bringing up children or being a full-time housewife, in fact being a full-time mother and housewife leads to feeling frustrated. For example, Chou said:

I don’t think marriage and children can fulfil women’s needs in their whole lives. On the contrary, marriage and bringing up children are two things which make many women feel frustrated and guilty. I think women can arrange their future lives to achieve different goals at different stages of lives. Women feel fulfilled once their goals have been achieved successfully. (Chou, 31)

8.4 Part Three: Structural Barriers

8.4.1 Lack of School Encouragement

Structural barriers in the UK included lack of school encouragement resulted in gender differentiation and lack of part-time university degrees. First I look at lack of school encouragement. Amongst the 18 interviewees eight focused on these issues: four women from the older age group, three from the middle age and one from the younger age cohorts reported they did not receive any guidance or encouragement from their school to move to further education. Sandra said:

As far as I remember we couldn’t have any career guidance, in my year it seemed to be three choices for girls: teacher, nurse and work in the shop. Those were the three things my friends did. We were just sort of following what the amount of people did (Sandra, 55).

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the notion that woman’s place was in the home was still strong. The Norwood Report of 1943 stressed the importance of relating boys’ education to the labour market, but emphasized that girls’ schooling must relate to their eventual place in the family.
In Chapter Three I mentioned that there was an awareness that girls’ attainment differed from that of boys, both in level and in subject. The current stereotypes of girls’ and boys’ and also women and men’s roles in society do little to encourage aspirations for educational achievement in girls (see Chapter Three). For girls, not only their class but also gender can exclude them from particular aspects of the educational experience and later they may have an inferior position in the division of employment compared with men in a capital industry society: it is obvious to see the connections between school and the economy and the labour market. Apart from the stereotype of girls’ and boys’ achievement made by the school structure for the older and middle-aged women in this study, the limits of chances to move on to higher education may also be seen as situational constraints. It was because they were in that situation when they thought pupils’ abilities were not recognized by the schools. One middle-aged English woman returned to higher education at age 51 and found there were significant differences between now and her time in terms of educational opportunities. She said:

I think today there are a lot more different ways in which you can get in to finding out what you want to do with then. You won’t just want one road. There are many roads. 25 years ago I don’t think schools recognised people got different abilities. They want to be tighter, they want to change you into either academic or you went to factories. (Strauss, 51)

As mentioned earlier, apart from the significant influences resulting from parents’ attitudes and values and lack of encouragement from school, adult women in the UK were not offered multi-routes to come to study at university until the establishment of the Open University and the higher education expansion in the 80s (See Chapter Two).

At the macro level, the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act both came into force in 1975. The Equal Opportunities Commission was established to monitor and publicise the new legislation, and discussion on gender and education began to creep into school agendas. These changes were influenced by the Women’s Movement, feminists published criticism of current
educational practices (Weiner, 1986: 265). The structural barrier on gender stereotype might be resolved but the impression given to younger adult women was barely noticeable. The perception from a younger woman such as Rachel was that she was not informed about into the ways either academe or vocational work after school. She said:

My school wasn’t encouraging. During my whole time in secondary years no body asked me any idea to stop on. Nobody showed interest at all, although I was at the top six and came out with 10 GCSEs. I can’t actually remember anybody mentioned it to me. (Rachel, 33)

As mentioned earlier, the lack of encouragement from school deterred both older and young adult participants from moving on to further education. However, the younger adults started to have more personal freedom deciding their future study partly because there was more educational opportunity for them, partly because the parents of younger adults tend to provide more freedom on young people toward further education, unlike their older counterparts. Therefore younger adults might decide to take a short break before university study when s/he graduated from secondary school. Young Stephanie said:

I had good results from the examinations. But I thought I have been in education all my life. I then wanted to take a year off to work abroad rather than going straight to study at university. I did go to Europe and work in a travel agency to support my expenses while living abroad. I considered this as a tremendous experience before I moved on to university education. I am glad I did this. (Stephanie, 28)

For younger adults, finding the “suitable direction” is important but difficult them. In Stephanie’s case, she saw many of her school friends going straight to university but feeling unhappy with the subjects they had chosen. For Stephanie, it took longer time to know what she was really interested in at university. She said:

I wanted to study Archaeology when I graduated from school I then changed my mind to Social Work. I saw many of my friends were not happy at university because they went to the types of Departments they were not interested in studying in. I believed I did the
right choice for myself then. (Stephanie, 28)

8.4.2 I Chose to Work Instead of Going on Study

Among the 18 interviewees, six focused on the issue of moving toward the labour market rather than higher education. Despite the fewer opportunities in education, three respondents from the older age and middle age cohorts reported they chose not to carry on with their education. Kathy said:

I didn’t really know what I wanted to do at age 18. I may choose to stay in school. But I was offered a job and I thought I would really be in love with that job. Actually that job lasted for quite a long time before I changed to another one. It was not a bad choice for me when I recall it now. (Kathy, 47)

Similarly, Ann and June reported they did not regret to enter paid employment, Ann said:

I did the first year of A-levels, however, once I was offered a full-time job I did not want to go back to the second year. I wanted to work and to have some money in my pocket. You know girls at that age. I was no exception either! (Ann, 45)

And June responded:

I couldn’t get training (more qualification) although I desired it. I took a job as a career (June, 51)

Debbie thinks she picked up her first paid job wrongly at a young age and the job let her down in terms of making a career, she regrets this:

If I knew then what I know now, I would have been more inclined to seek a rewarding career. (Debbie, 45)

Higher education has for most people been the guarantee for a future career, even possibly until now, but these women lacked the opportunities to enter higher education not only by the
limits of higher education but also because the situation had pushed them either to work or to start a family. As here I am discussing the structural barriers in terms of lack of multi-entrance routes to study at university, I cannot deny that there was a strong social impact upon women’s roles in the family. The structure barriers are integrated with situational barriers here in terms of government policy and family expectations of working mothers. From the macro level, the government policy was encouraging more females to be involved in the labour market while woman’s place was supposed to be at home. Besides, when the job opportunities were opened up, the interrelated services such as childcare, part-time in-service training were not offered until the 1990s to career women, particularly with family commitments. Adults usually tended to go to adult courses run by different organisational bodies around the country before part-time courses were offered among the Higher Education Institutions in the early 80s. Part-time study opened a more flexible choice for English adult returnees to pursue higher education without formal qualifications. Older and middle-aged women benefited more than their younger counterparts.

Adult participants still favoured part-time courses when they returned to higher education now. Amongst the 18 interviewees, 16 focused on the issue of part-time courses on their return to education. Six of them are older women and men, and eight are middle-aged women. The preferences for part-time courses might vary for each individual, depending, for example, on flexible timetable, convenient location and type of subject. But the major reason could be that part-time degree study allows them to gain a higher education degree while at the same time meeting all other needs. The younger adults mentioned their preference for part-time courses mainly because of the paid employment they are involved in at the same time. However, structural barriers tend to be less significant for the younger adults compared with their older counterparts. It is possible to say there are more choices, mainstream university for example, for this group of students to participate in higher education nowadays.

Other structural barriers as reported by most of the participants regardless of age,
include lack of the type of subjects they are interested in and poor campus facilities. Amongst the 18 interviewees, two middle aged women and two younger women focused on this issue. Stephanie, aged 28, had a gap year before she returned to learning at university. She said:

I wanted to go to Manchester but their courses won’t be as interesting as this one.
(Stephanie, 28)

Similarly, Rachel complained she was forced to turn down going to the local college nearby since they did not offer the types of courses she liked doing.

I was expected to go to the local college to take some evening classes or part-time classes. There wasn’t any option I was interested in. I just carried on working full time.
(Rachel, 33)

“How did you find out about this course here?” I asked Rachel and she carried on:

I did my Access course here, then I read the brochure about the new programme and decided to enrol in this which interested me more than other courses after I had completed the Access course. Also, I am familiar with the tutors and geographical environment.

Other problems concerning the structural obstacles included campus facilities such as library access. June, aged 51, was studying in an institution where the campus facilities were not convenient for adult participants. She said:

I wanted a book last year, I went to the library and handed in the form but it arrived months later, it did come a long way. The library where I borrow books is located on the joint campus and it is where our classes are held. Actually I live closer to the main campus where there is a much bigger library there. Disappointingly I cannot borrow or return books from that library. I think it is very inconvenient for students like us particularly when they have assignments needed to be handed in after the holidays. I sometimes drove for half an hour only to collect my books.

Adult participants tend to have high expectations of what they would gain from the teaching classes, as can be noticed from the following response. The older adult Michael did his higher
education straight after school. He has many rich life experiences while working for the Royal Air Force for most of his life. This may make him more critical about the types of course he attended at university. Michael said:

I like most of it (course) very much but it is a lot more like being at school than university as it used to be. A lot of the teaching is rather formal, like at school. Forty years ago, we were expected to work much more on our own, and to justify our results in one-to-one or small group tutorials. It is obvious that at this Institution we are being educated much more cheaply. I am happy with the course, but I am a little bit disappointed that we don't seem to get one-to-one attention, at least in the first year and that the teaching is often very normal like at school. (Michael, 70)

Briefly, it showed that although the educational opportunities have increased, the choice of courses, library access and teaching quality seemed to be less satisfied among the English adult participants in this study.

Next I move on to examine the structural obstacles in Taiwan.

Structural barriers in Taiwan included the University Joint Entrance Examination and the stratification of school education as cited frequently among adult respondents from Taiwan in this study. Actually these are really the two sides of one coin since school stratification has played a significant role in women returnees’ transition from secondary to tertiary education.

8.4.3 The University Joint Entrance Examination

The University Joint Entrance Examination was the pivot for the stratification from secondary school to tertiary education until 1991 in Taiwan. However it should not be ignored that there was an increased demand for skilled workers and technicians due to the industrialisation of the 1980s. That boosted the state to prolong the expansion of the vocational sector in secondary and tertiary education. The number of higher education institutions was increased
dramatically because of the explosive increase in the number of junior colleges (replaced by names such as the Technology College or University Technology in the late 1990s). Compared with the mainstream university, these colleges broadly have a lower entrance requirement. In this study a group of student body came from these vocational institutions. They came to study here because they could not pass that type of entrance requirement from the mainstream university. Amongst the 13 interviewees in Taiwan, 11 respondents attended vocational high school before they returned to university. One middle-aged woman, Su-Zu, reported she attended a vocational high school where the majority of pupils have the impression that they are weaker in terms of academic ability. Their impression of insufficient academic ability resulted from their failure to pass the examination. Besides, the types of school adult returnees attended had already decided their further educational destination (see Chapter Seven). Amongst the 13 interviewees, nine focused upon this issue and three middle-aged women and six younger women reported they did not carry on their studies because they had failed their examination. In Taiwan, failed examination was the most commonly cited reason by the middle-aged women. For them the lack of support from their parents to move on to higher education was a significant factor, too, as mentioned earlier when discussing parents' attitudes and values. The interferences in terms of barriers were found here to include the structural (failed examination), situational (parents did not support girls' education) and dispositional barriers (feeling lack of academic ability). The failure of examinations was also reported among the younger respondents. It is possible to interpret that structural barriers such as school stratification and the University Entrance Examination had deterred not only the middle aged participants but also the younger ones from studying at higher education. It was highly competitive for secondary school pupils who wanted to enter higher education.
Different results from their English counterparts were evident. Other structural obstacles mentioned amongst respondents from Taiwan included limited choices of subjects; restrictions from employers and the higher education institution favouring daytime traditional university students. Amongst 13 respondents, five focused on this issue; and two respondents from younger and three from middle-aged groups reported they could not find out the types of courses they would like to undertake from the institutions nearby. For example, the middle-aged woman Soong reported:

I am interested more in Literature and Social Studies, however I cannot find these subjects at the institutions nearby. I found something interesting here and came to study here. Also it is closer than going to other institutions geographically. But I am still not very happy with the course here. (Soong, 34)

I then asked her why she was not happy with the courses. She carried on:

We (adult students) are not satisfied with the variety of courses presented by the institution. I understood that many classes have to cancel because the number of applicants is low. Personally I suggest all the design of courses, the methods and the skills should be based on the ideas, whether they are applicable to students' future uses or not. (Song)

However she is happy with the type of programmes which she was undertaking. In Taiwan, some technology institutions are inclined to devise courses in a more practical way, or in other words a vocational way, to recruit more new students to fulfil their needs. Soong concluded:

I am happy I can take some other optional courses. I will have the opportunities to be involved in a placement where I can apply the knowledge and what I learn from the classes. It makes my study more practical in terms of seeking work. Also it brings me more knowledge about my future work. (Soong, 34)
Furthermore other structural barriers are related to programme design, teachers' attitudes, teaching methods and study timetable. Amongst 13 interviewees, six focused on the issue of teachers' attitudes and teaching methods in the classes. Two were from middle-aged and four were from younger groups. For example, Wen and Jade, both from the same institution, expressed the views they need to be trained professionally:

We disagree that teachers should be ‘too kind’ (particularly to be too generous on our assessments) to us because we work as full-time students. If teachers thought we cannot handle our study well due to our full-time jobs, they must be over worried! We all want to continue our study in the future, as the result, we can try our best to reach teachers' requirements even if it is quite tough for us. We are hoping to be trained professionally to be more competitive when we finish the degree here. (Wen, 31; Jade, 31)

It is not surprising to interpret that these respondents are returning to learn for a new job or better job. They would be very keen learning something “useful” for their next job on the one hand. On the other hand, these respondents were attending an English as Foreign Language class and wanted to become English teachers when they finish their degree study. Compared with most of their English counterparts, these women are much younger and much more vocationally orientated when they decided to return to learn. Besides, the type of learning organisation may lack sufficient classrooms for adult participants. As a result some complained they had to be squeezed in a small room during a two-hour lecture and the teaching was not satisfactory for adult participants. Kuo said:

I was quite surprised with the quality of teaching and the number of students attending in the same classes. Some of our teachers are not keen at improving their teaching skills. They still teach in a traditional way. I am not taking the History of Music in the World because there are two hundred students in the same classes in total, it wasn’t what I expected before I came. Also, what I dislike is the knowledge of the course content. I don’t feel like learning something in-depth after sitting the whole day in the classes. (Kuo, 42)
By contrast, two younger adults reported they are happy with the courses they are undertaking now. For example, Jade said: ‘The learning contents are deeper and have more insight compared with other courses I have undertaken before’. The other reported she got used to the type of learning after a year.

Many adult respondents attended the course during the weekends or in the evenings. However, most of them share the same facilities with daytime students such as teachers, classrooms, and other university facilities. Adult participants considered they should also benefit equally from the same services as the traditional university students do. As a result adult participants request more benefits from the school. This has become a common issue among institutions that are involved in recruiting adult students but less willing to look after students’ benefits or the services that the school should offer to adult students. As one male middle-aged respondent reported, the school ignored the needs of adult students at university. He said:

The barriers are the difference between the students who study in daytime and night. From this semester, the University started to organise more activities for students at night classes. All the social activities have been designed for daytime school students of which, I think, some should be shifted to evenings as well. In fact, there were fewer club activities for evening class students compared with their day class counterparts. (Hu, 45)

Similarly to their English counterparts, the respondents from Taiwan, the males and younger participants reported that they have gained more educational training in the past few years. Four out of 13 interviewees focused on this issue. Three males and one younger adult agreed that they had more chances to take in-service training inland or even abroad. For example, Rich seemed to be proud to recall his history of in-service training:

In 1994, I once went to study in the Language School of the Department of Defence. It was a six-month long training course in English language. I received the Certificate of Foreign Affairs Communication. In 1996, I had the opportunity to attend a training course in English language in the United States for a year. This training course was to train the Chinese soldiers to become foreign representatives, then they will work with
Other respondents like James who is a police officer may need to attend some course designed by the organisation where he works to maintain his “personal records” which will decide his promotion afterwards. Many public officers or government officers need to reach this requirement. The organisation or government will pay for them. Therefore, James used his free time undertaking some professional training:

There was a nine-year gap since my previous education. But during these years sometimes I attended some short training courses from my working place e.g. computing or English seminars. I did not have much time to take any other courses outside my working place. (James, 43)

Significantly, these respondents are males and one female young adult. There is no female respondent from the middle-aged cohort. This may be interpreted that the situation reflects that middle-aged women in Taiwan have gained fewer chances in promotion, in other words they tend to work at a less professional position compared with their male and younger counterparts.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have compared and analysed the three types of barriers cited among the adult participants from three age cohorts and two nations. The situational barriers included firstly, family attitudes and values which were significant factors on older and middle aged women in both countries while attitudes turned out to be more supportive for the younger generation. There is a distinction between middle class and working class in terms of girls’ education in the family in the UK. Structural barriers such as failure to pass the entrance examination and the patriarchal family ideology rooted in Taiwanese ethnicity have also greatly influenced girls’ education in Taiwan, regardless of age. Secondly, the older English women and
middle-aged Taiwanese women tend to have husbands who are against their current study, possibly because of the stereotype of the role of mother and housewife. Early retirement and leisure activities were much more widely recognized among the English women than their Taiwanese counterparts. Thirdly, gender equality in the family tends to be closer in the younger generation in Taiwan, even if the ideology of woman’s place in the home remains in the society. Women tend to look after children on their own, and that is what their husbands want them to do. Fourthly, the idea of time poverty among the women participants varies depending on the age cohorts. Older women tend to be affected less significantly compared with the middle aged and younger women in both countries. Time constraints have a strong link with women’s dependent children and paid employment. Moreover, the self-perception on the role as mother and housewife remains in both countries regardless of age. Fifthly, financial constraints tend to affect the younger participants in the UK more than the younger adults in Taiwan because the type of programmes the Taiwanese attended led to further careers.

Generally, the dispositional barriers are overcome among adult participants in this study because they have been involved in their current study over the past one or two years. However, lack of self-confidence is still considered as a barrier among adult respondents, regardless of age and country. The most important dispositional outcomes found from this study are that self-esteem and self-fulfilment led to self-development. And it brought different meanings to different age cohorts, too. Country may not be a significant factor in this. In addition, older adults and some middle-aged participants from both countries reported they were self-fulfilled from being a parent or wife. However, English males and women in their early forties have said that women nowadays should not rely on men, while middle-aged and younger women from Taiwan tend to separate the idea of self-fulfilment from being a parent or wife. The ideology of intellectuals being superior to other social occupations is rooted in the minds of the general public. Also women used to have a lower status than men in Taiwan.
society. Similar results have also been found among younger participants. The structural barriers are different in the UK and Taiwan. The former included the lack of school encouragement, gender differentiation by schoolteachers and lack of part-time university study. The older and middle-aged participants were affected more than the younger ones. The University Joint Entrance Examination and school stratification were significant barriers for Taiwanese respondents, regardless of age. Unlike their English counterparts, the respondents from Taiwan tended to encounter other structural obstacles that referred to school authority and school teaching such as school favouring daytime students in terms of adult respondents' benefits; the depth of teaching content, and the attitude from teachers. It is possible to interpret that adult respondents are much more demanding than traditional students in terms of what they want and are interested to learn. However it is also important to notice that the higher education institutions need a more comprehensive arrangement for adult participants not only in school facilities but also in programme design and the attitude of teachers. These findings now allow me to investigate whether the lives of women returnees in the UK and Taiwan are convergent in terms of barriers and opportunities returning to higher education.
Chapter 9
The Comparison

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall elaborate on the comparative method used in this study and the national and social contexts as the variables to compare the differences and similarities within and across the two countries. It divides into three parts: part one contains the theoretical idea of comparative method. In part two, country will be the variable to compare the differences and similarities among the three age cohorts in the UK and the two age cohorts in Taiwan. Part three will be the comparison across the two nations.

9.2 Part One: Theoretical Discussion of Comparison

Chapters Three and Four above provide information about the changes of women’s lives in terms of barriers and opportunities in the two nations since 1950s; and the quantitative and qualitative results are reported in Chapters Seven and Eight. This allows me to answer the following questions:

“What are the opportunities and barriers and how have they changed for adult women returning to higher education in the UK and Taiwan?”

“How far have the barriers and opportunities for women returning to HE been caused by social and gender factors?” and

“Do younger women returnees have more opportunities and lower barriers than their older counterparts when returning to higher education (HE)?”

In this study adult women’s lives vary according to their social and cultural background, ethnicity and class. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the comparative method is used here to find out the differences within each country and between the two countries, as well as
similarities. By examining different societies, I can ask why some have developed in similar ways and others in diverse ways. This adds to an understanding and explanation of the complicated relationship between economic, social and political systems. Through my research, the social trends and cultural background in two different societies enable me to consider the macro factors that influence social and political change and the micro factors peculiar to each social setting. May (1993: 158) pointed out that comparative analysis considers both endogenous and exogenous factors. The former are those which are peculiar to the country which is being studied, while the latter are those elements, such as gender and race relations, which while influencing that country’s social and political relations, are not simply peculiar to it. The adult participants in this study grew up in two different cultural backgrounds, and as Taylor (1990: 34) indicated, ‘comparative researchers need to be sensitive to the “cultural specificities” which affect how exogenous factors influence each country’. In this study the structure opened up and the personal resistance changed over time, for example the family structure and generational attitudes changed over time.

As cited in Chapter Five, Winch (1958) has argued that in order to understand a culture, we have to know the rules which are employed in that culture; only then can we understand the ways in which it views the social world.

9.3 Part Two: The Differences and Similarities in the UK and Taiwan

In Chapter Eight, the findings show that in the UK the significant situational barriers include school stratification, gender inequality at school and lack of opportunities in higher education. In Taiwan, the influential structural barriers include school stratification and the University Joint Entrance Examination. Moving to situational barriers, the findings showed there were major obstacles among the respondents in both nations. In the UK, the situational barriers
include family ideology, partner and children’s attitudes, time constraints, and financial constraints. In Taiwan the situational barriers correspond to the same categories but the situations occurred in different age cohorts. Child care was also cited by respondents in Taiwan but not by English respondents. The respondents from Taiwan reported that education adds more values in terms of vocational prospects which was not voiced by their English counterparts. Lack of confidence is commonly seen as a dispositional barrier among respondents in the UK and Taiwan. However, most but not all, of the English respondents have overcome their fear of participating in a higher education experience. By contrast, lack of confidence is still seen as an important negative impact among Taiwanese respondents even when their progress of study has helped to enhance their self-confidence. It resulted in the type of subjects adult respondents chose. Also, the sense of self-fulfilment and self-development was reported amongst adult participants from both countries despite different age cohorts and different attitudes toward the meaning of self-fulfilment after undertaking university study. Details will be addressed on in the section dispositional outcomes.

Below follow details from the three age cohorts in the UK and two age cohorts in Taiwan.

UK

The structural barriers included school stratification, gender inequality and lack of educational opportunities.

Both the older and middle-aged English adult women reported that school stratification and gender inequality at school occurred in the years when they were young. Older and middle-aged women tended to leave school due to gender differentiation in the school system including teachers’ attitudes and the school curriculum which favoured boys staying on in
education. Girls’ education was stratified into either academic or vocational orientation. Women’s chances to upgrade to academic places were very limited in the post-war period. The older and middle-aged English women, particularly from working class background, found there was no encouragement from their schools. However, the younger women found they had more freedom to decide whether they wanted to go on to further education.

There is a group of older and middle-aged women who attended leading academic schools but stopped moving on to further education at a young age. For these women the negative impacts may have resulted from, for example, parents’ attitudes which favoured boys’ education, and early marriage. I shall draw out details later.

For older and middle-aged women, gender inequality tended to continue at school and can even be found in recent years despite the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, both of which came into force in 1975, and the Equal Opportunities Commission which was established to monitor and publicise the new legislation. For the younger generation, the stratification by schools may be less rigid but gender inequality in subjects still existed.

Throughout the twentieth century, the education of girls has been considered to be something of a problem. There was awareness that girls’ attainment is different from that of boys, both in level and in subject (see Chapter Three). HMI (1992) and a number of educational researchers have found a widespread tendency in mixed schools to believe that girls enjoy total equality simply by virtue of having equal access to the whole school curriculum. As I mentioned earlier, the English younger respondents tended to have more power on deciding their first destination after school compared with their older counterparts. For example, the younger respondents decided to postpone their entry to tertiary education; instead, they took part-time jobs while travelling to foreign countries. This type of attitude towards education from the younger generation must be the result of the multi-routes to accessing higher education and the changes of parents’ attitudes that provide more opportunities for younger adult returnees.

The multi-routes to university can also be regarded as a positive impact upon older and
middle-aged women since these lacked the chance to study at university at a younger age. The most significant change in English higher education expansion started in the early 1970s when higher education in the UK was a binary system based on universities and polytechnics. Until the late 1980s and early 1990s, the post-compulsory sector (further and higher education) saw the most dramatic and fundamental change. The older women did not return to higher education until the past decade when the opportunities for non-traditional students to study at English universities increased in the late 80s and early 90s. These older women could not have returned to university until they were in their 50s and 60s: they waited for thirty years to return to university after they first left school. Consequently the middle-aged women would catch up on earlier chances to return to university in their 40s and 50s when normally that is about the time women reached the stage of “family empty nest”. In this research the younger adults took greatest advantage of the multi-routes to higher education.

Taiwan

The structural barriers include school stratification and the University Joint Entrance Examination. Both the middle and younger aged participants from Taiwan encountered the barriers of school stratification and the University Joint Entrance Examination when they left school. (There is no older age cohort in Taiwan in this study.) The school stratification and University Joint Entrance Examination have been the two main systems to select students for secondary and tertiary levels in Taiwan, and did not change until the early 1990s. In this research, the majority of the respondents from Taiwan, regardless of age, graduated from vocational schools. The middle-aged women either stopped at secondary level or moved on to
tertiary education but remained in the vocational college system. The female ratio remained higher in secondary vocational schools, and many attended the former five-years-colleges in Taiwan. There was a strong influence from the establishment of vocational high schools and five-years-colleges aimed to meet the greater demands of the industrialisation in the society of Taiwan since the 1970s. Between 1960 and 1970, both private junior colleges and vocational high schools in the private sector grew by leaps and bounds (see Chapter Four). Also, the requirements of skill based professionals replaced the labour-centred industries when Taiwan transformed into high technology development in the 80s and onwards.

The University Joint Entrance Examination in Taiwan stratified pupils according to their academic performances regardless of their abilities. Those who failed the examination either went to cram schools or attended private senior high schools or vocational high schools. The phenomenon started to change with higher education expansion. This occurred in three different periods of which the latest, between the late 1980s and early 1990s, had helped increase largely the number of higher education institutions. Furthermore, the multi-routes access to universities provided greater chances for both traditional and non-traditional students than during the previous four decades.

I mentioned earlier that there are no older Taiwanese participants in this study. One possible reason could be that the culture of returning to university is not popular among the older people; on the other hand, due to the family culture in Taiwan, many older people lived with their married sons. Returning to university was not something they should do at their age; they should enjoy their later life with grandchildren or being involved in other social activities. Moreover, the older generation grew up in the post-Japanese occupation period (1946 onwards) when the six-year primary education system was enforced in 1943 and compulsory education was extended to nine years in 1968 (see Chapter Four). The former helped more women gain a basic education; the latter enlarged the opportunities for middle-aged women to complete their secondary education at junior school level. Hence, before compulsory
education was extended to nine years, women could stop moving on toward further education after completion of their primary education. It is now possible to explain why the oldest participants in this study are in their early 50s. The basic education qualification which the older participants held cannot help them gain access to enter universities since the higher education still puts barriers on entrance requirements, even if it has improved greatly. Instead, they may go to other non-mainstream institutions e.g. a community college or the Older People’s University.

Next I move on to situational barriers in the two nations.

UK

The situational barriers include family ideology, partners and children’s attitudes, time constraints and financial constraints.

The family ideology tended to be similar among the older and middle-aged English women. Boys’ education took priority over girls’, and girls would be needed to help with the family economics in the post-war period: these were cited as the two significant phenomena. Class difference was also a significant trigger to decide whether the older and middle-aged women would stay in education or leave at a young age. It showed that in the UK family ideology had a close link with class difference. Middle class girls were mainly encouraged towards academic achievement while not losing their femininity. Working class girls were expected to learn the necessary skills for their future domestic role, but in reality these girls faced the dual role perhaps not for all, but containing part of their lives. In capitalist societies, it has been suggested that there are close connections between the family and the school in contributing to the maintenance and reproduction of those societies. In an earlier section I cited the gender inequality occurring in schools due to the teachers’ attitudes and school subjects. The younger
generation may gain a more equal access to school but the gender inequality somehow remained. By contrast, the younger adults found their parents to be supportive of their further education compared with their older and middle-aged counterparts. The reasons which deterred them from moving on to further education tended to be based on personal choices. As educational opportunities increased the younger generation was encouraged to follow their own choices regarding higher education.

The older women, particularly, and a small number of middle-aged women encountered situational obstacles from their husbands rather than their children. For these women, their grown-up children tended to be supportive of their return to education. As children belong to the younger generation they have a different ideology from their husbands. Therefore children like to see their mothers approach the type of learning they are interested in. Partly the older and the middle-aged women with fewer family commitments were able to start to look for something purely for themselves after being mothers and housewives for many years. The idea that women’s duties are in the family, rooted in the older and middle-aged women and their husbands, started to change in western society like Britain when it experienced industrialisation and modernisation and the introduction of the women’s movement in the 1970s. However, despite such social changes, the husbands of older, and some of middle-aged women, tend to keep the tradition of a patriarchal family where the husband is the centre of the entire family life. Besides, it should not be forgotten that some of the older and middle-aged women came from wealthy families where the household income tended to be in two peaks, either poorer or wealthier (see Chapter Seven). Those who have no stable income, e.g. older adults, rely on pensions; younger adults and single parents may belong to the former, while middle class married women whose husbands’ income is good belong to the latter. As a result, the husband may possibly retain the dominant role in the family. Compared with the older and middle-aged women, the younger women tended to have a supportive husband. It showed that the women’s involvement in paid jobs, the changes of family structures and the
lower number of children (see Chapter Seven, Table 7.7) allowed them to be more equal to their husbands in their marital lives.

Time constraints occurred in the three age cohorts but resulted from different reasons. Older women tended to be less affected by time constraints while the middle-aged with dependent children and the younger women with a paid job showed greater concerns with time. Generally speaking, the older respondents returned to learn for personal self-fulfilment and enjoyed the pure learning. Time constraints occurred only when the university classes overlapped with personal activities, e.g. travelling or family visits etc. The older adults might still keep up a paid job where the part-time working schedule needed to be fitted into the university schedule, but this is not commonly seen among older participants. Different situations occurred for the middle and younger-aged participants due to family commitments and the increased number of women in paid employment. The time obstacle could be even worse when it came to single parents with dependent children. Middle-aged women needed a paid job to support their study at university while a tight schedule may show more anxiety about academic learning. The dispositional barriers thus may be a result of battling with time obstacles particularly for women with a part-time wage and school children at home. Middle-aged women from a working class background tended to be more affected by time constraints than their middle-class wealthy counterparts. The younger adults’ time constraints are related to their paid employment. Both the middle-aged and younger returnees needed paid employment to avoid encountering financial difficulties. As a result, the tension caused by time poverty became more complicated if added to women’s paid employment. The lack of confidence resulting from a negative impression from previous learning might worsen the women’s situation.

The older and middle-aged women tend to have fewer financial difficulties as a result of their middle-class background and paid employment. By contrast the younger respondents with working-class background may encounter more financial obstacles with added costs and they
rely on student loans to help with their daily expenses. Generally speaking, financial constraints were cited less by the English participants in this study. The older and middle-aged women were able to manage the fees either on their own or they asked their middle-class husbands for the money. The working class women, mainly middle-aged and the younger participants relied on student loans. However, they considered that future careers would pay back the expenses and were not too concerned about the fees and additional costs.

Taiwan

The situational barriers in Taiwan include: family ideology, partners and children’s attitudes, time constraints, and lack of childcare.

The middle-aged women from Taiwan experienced the boys’ preferences in the family particularly those of Taiwanese ethnicity. Parents’ preferences for boys’ education tended to be less apparent in the younger generation, regardless of ethnicity. Male Taiwanese, regardless of age and ethnicity, received more support from parents. In Chinese history, men have controlled the economy, law and religion for over 3,500 years; women never questioned this situation until the twentieth century. The ideology of Confucianism has cemented a patriarchal culture, which ensures men’s superiority inside and outside the family. Women are confined to subordinate roles and almost entirely excluded from the public sphere (see Chapter Four). In the 1970s, middle-aged women might grow up in the extended family where the ideology of Confucianism was rooted in women’s lives. The lessons of obedience, respect and orderliness guided women to become docile, obedient, quiet, intuitive and timid.

Women in this study with Taiwanese, Mainland and Hakka ethnic backgrounds were also brought up with a different family ideology. Most of the Mainlanders came to Taiwan with
the KMT government in 1949 with no land or property. Education became the most valuable objective for Mainlanders and their offspring compared with others in the society of Taiwan. Also, Mainlanders contained a group of professionals who held important positions in different fields of the society and valued the education of their offspring greatly, regardless of sex. By contrast, the women of Taiwanese origin, the majority of respondents in this study, tended to grow up in an environment where fathers tended to be the powerful and dominant figures in the patriarchal family which differentiated between the education of boys and girls. Family ideology was not the single factor which hindered middle-aged women’s participation in higher education. As I mentioned earlier, failing the University Joint Examination enhanced parents’ attitudes to girls’ destination for future marriage rather than a rewarding career. Combined with these obstacles middle-aged women tended to move to a paid job, although some had overcome the barriers and held a college degree at a young age. The majority of respondents from Taiwan left school between the ages of 17-21 (see Chapter Seven, Table 7.11). Some left education at the age of 18, when they completed the vocational high school education, others at the age of 20, after they graduated from a five-years-college course. The vocational schools provided more opportunities in education, consequently more women returned to tertiary education through the former vocational colleges.

The middle-aged women found their husbands and children tended to be less supportive of their current study. Those whose husbands are not supportive tend to be full-time housewives with school-age children. Such unfavourable attitudes of the husbands may be regarded as a consequence of Confucianism on the one hand; on the other hand, the job market was not favourable for married women with or without dependent children until the ideology of gender equality was introduced widely into the society of Taiwan in the 1980s.

The partners of adult women participants who reasoned against their returning to learn at university were possibly influenced by the time schedule of classes, as most higher education institutions in Taiwan provide classes for adult respondents in the evenings and weekends.
(see Chapter Eight). These men regarded the return to education of their wives as hobbies with learning activities which should come after the women’s daily routine e.g. cooking meals for the family and looking after the dependent children. As a result, the negative attitude towards women’s learning showed gender inequality which has somehow remained in some of the families in Taiwan.

By contrast, the males, regardless of age, tended to have a supportive wife. In contrast to the middle-aged women, the younger women in this study tended to have a supportive husband. However, the majority of younger women remained single: almost 60% of respondents. Also, the majority of respondents have one child or none (see Chapter Seven).

Children tended to be less supportive as a result of their dependence. Also, in some institutions the full-time degree study was held during the weekends and evenings when children had returned from school. Similar situations also occurred with the middle-aged male Taiwanese. Mostly, the middle-aged women whose children are of school age rely on their parents. If the parents do not stay at home, children would ideally be sent to their grandparents’ house or stay in a cram school until someone was available to pick them up.

The change of scene might not be pleasant for children spending time with someone other than their own parents in the evenings or during weekends. Besides, as parents nowadays become less dominant in the family, both male and female middle-aged respondents aim to become the role model for their teenage children when they return to higher education. Adult parents, both men and women reported their return to learn has improved the relationship between children and parents. It is possible that the type of knowledge parents needed and the length of time parents spend with children have played positive roles between children and parents in terms of relationship.

Time poverty was experienced amongst middle-aged women in Taiwan as a result of coping with the children’s school schedule and their university study. These women tended to register in a class with flexible timetables when their children were at school and these
schools may be less academic. The younger women also encountered time obstacles mainly because of travel and time management issues between their full-time paid work and full-time university study. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, because most of the younger women in this study remained single, family commitments were less often mentioned as an obstacle in terms of time. Not only female, but also male participants in Taiwan found they lack time. In Taiwan, therefore, time constraint was not simply regarded as a gender issue but a structural obstacle from the state where most men and women with full-time paid employment in the family would face similar issues as other female and male participants did. It showed that time constraints may be regarded as structural barriers since parents need all kinds of supports from the state in terms of childcare.

Childcare was considered as an issue for middle-aged respondents, both men and women, and for those younger adults who are married. It may deter younger women from returning to university and may explain why the majority of younger women in this study remained single. Most women in Taiwan take the responsibility of childcare themselves but this may become problematic when both parents are busy. The alternative is asking the grandparents for help. Nowadays even the younger women decide to stay at home to look after their young children. It is possible that younger women regard raising their child as rewarding a job as paid work. On the other hand, many women's employment tended to be in the service sectors or with lower wages which may not be enough to afford the fees for a professional nanny and the childcare centre. However, professional nannies and childcare centres may be considered when for example, women and men have full-time jobs but have no close family nearby or the aging grandparents are less willing or able to look after their grandchildren. The above reasons may explain the phenomenon that the younger women with dependent children in Taiwan are less able to return to university.

Next I move on to situational outcomes from the process of returning which were mentioned amongst adult participants from Taiwan, but not by their English counterparts.
The situational outcomes: education adds more value in terms of vocational prospects.

In Taiwan, the cultural impacts encourage learning activities because learning behaviours are greatly valued by Confucian ideology, more than any other activities in life; people tend to regard this as an investment in the human capital. Besides, adult participants in Taiwan tend to engage on a programme that will lead to a further career and this may make participants more willing to pay for their learning activity despite their current weak financial situation. However, similar results have not been found in the UK study.

Below follows a comparison of the dispositional barriers between the two nations.

**UK**

Dispositional barriers included lack of confidence.

Among the three age cohorts, lack of self-confidence was comparatively less reported by English participants as their self-confidence was reinforced through the process of learning. However, a few cases reported fear of carrying on with their academic study. This fear possibly resulted from an anxiety whether the ageing people were able to cope with university study after a big time gap since their schooling. It also probably resulted from time poverty between part-time paid employment, university schedule and dependent children for middle-aged women, as mentioned earlier. The dispositional barrier is tightly integrated with situational barriers for these middle-aged women. However, most of the adult returnees in this study are in their second or third year of university study, and the major dispositional barriers have been overcome, regardless of age. When they referred to their first year study they might
have lacked self-confidence, academic skills or felt too old to study at university. It is worth mentioning here that the working-class women gained self-confidence in proving they were able to undertake an academic study, regardless of age. The idea of equal footing in other people’s eyes tended to be far more significant compared with their middle-class counterparts. The middle-class women had self-confidence and the progress of their study helped to guide this self-confidence toward self-development.

Taiwan

The dispositional barriers included: lack of confidence in the type of chosen course.

Both middle- and younger-aged respondents found they lacked confidence when they were undertaking studies at university. Their fear was caused by the type of courses adults participated in Taiwanese institutions, particularly those belonging to English language studies. Their negative feeling also came from previous school learning experiences and examination failure, regardless of age. As mentioned earlier, the majority of participants in Taiwan attended vocational schools or experienced the failure of the University Entrance examination. However, middle-aged men tended to be more confident about participating in university learning than middle- and younger-aged women because they went on to professional training and held a degree at a young age. Academic study was not unfamiliar to them.

The following section shows the dispositional outcomes that were found through the process of study amongst the adult respondents from both countries, despite the differences in age groups and different attitudes toward the meanings of self-fulfilment and self-development.
UK

Dispositional outcomes: self-confidence built up throughout the process of study, increased self-fulfilment, and self-development.

The growth in self-confidence can be viewed as a major outcome for adult participants returning to education in this study. They realised that they are equipped with appropriate skills to cope with the academic demands of their course through progress during the crucial period. Mercer and Saunders (2004: 297) found that the successful negotiation of these conflicts facilitate development not just in a strictly academic sense, but also in terms of general development by providing a more positive sense of self. The feeling of self-fulfilment did not only result in the reconstruction of self-confidence during the process of study but also feelings of being a satisfied mother in the home. Returning to education has changed their way of thinking and this led them, usually mothers and housewives, to gain a more positive position in their family life. The dispositional outcomes influenced the situational barrier in terms of personal attitude, and probably vice versa.

Taiwan

Dispositional outcomes: self-confidence and self-satisfaction.

In Taiwan, the results are very similar to their English counterparts but the age cohorts tend to be younger. Adults reported their self-confidence increased through their progress. Others may interpret the self-confidence in aspects of learning makes them feel self-fulfilled. Importantly, this notion was addressed by both female and male respondents in Taiwan.
Self-satisfaction was found in the younger age range of 30-50 years in Taiwan compared with the respondents aged 55 and above in the UK. It is possible to interpret this, firstly, that the majority of older respondents in this study are English, and the majority of Taiwanese respondents belong to the younger and middle-aged cohorts (see Chapter Seven). Secondly, opportunities may possibly not have opened up for English older participants until recent years while the middle-aged and younger Taiwanese participants have now caught up. There is an implication that Taiwan has become through rapid changes economically and socially which have given the younger and middle-aged participants more opportunities in education. It took a longer journey for English older adults to gain such opportunities.

9.4 Summary of Part Two

Among the structural barriers, in the UK:

The Changes of Family Ideology and Educational Opportunities Affected on Older and Middle-aged Women:

(1) Older and middle-aged women tended to leave school due to gender differentiation in the school system including teachers' attitudes and a school curriculum which favoured boys staying on in education. The older and middle-aged English women, particularly from a working class background, found there was no encouragement from their schools. However, the changes of family ideology and increased number of universities allowed the younger women to have more freedom to decide whether they would go on to further education.

(2) Older women could not return to higher education until the last decade; the younger generation benefited most from the higher education expansion compared with their older and middle-aged counterparts.
Gender Inequality Remained Amongst Younger Generation:

(3) Gender inequality existed in schools and although the situation improved it still affected the younger generation despite the social context changing to be “friendly” to females in the broad sense.

In Taiwan:

Taiwan Changed After the UK But Has Moved Quicker in the Educational Opportunities: School Stratification and University Join Entrance Examination Affected on Middle- and Younger-Aged Women:

(1) Both the middle- and younger-aged participants from Taiwan encountered the barriers of school stratification and the University Joint Entrance Examination when they left school. University in Taiwan started its multi-routes in the early 1990s. However, none of the participants in this study benefited from the newly established multi-routes to access to universities.

(2) The middle-aged women either stopped at secondary level or moved on to tertiary education within the vocational college system. This system, both secondary and tertiary, has been established to meet the needs of skilled labourers in the society of Taiwan since the 1970s. Women in Taiwan have played an important role in the development of the economy and modernization.

Among the situational barriers, in the UK:

The Change of Gender Equality Has Found Amongst the Younger Generation but Remained amongst Older and Middle Aged Women in Terms of Husbands’ Attitudes Toward Their Learning Activities:
(1) The education of the older and middle-aged women was restricted by boys' education being preferred to girls' and the need for girls to help the family economy. Besides, family ideology has a close link with class difference. By contrast, the younger adults found their parents became supportive. The reasons deterring them from moving on to further education tended to be based on personal choices. The younger generation tended to have less dominant parents and gained more freedom in making decisions for their own lives.

(2) The older women, particularly, and a small number of middle-aged women, encountered situational obstacles from their husbands rather than their children. Compared with the older and middle-aged women, the younger women tended to have a supportive husband. It showed that the changes in family structures and the reduced number of children (see Chapter Seven) allowed couples to be equal in marital life.

*Time Constraints Are Still the Concern for Women at All Age Levels:*

(3) Time constraints existed in the three age cohorts but for different reasons. There was less negative impact on older participants. By contrast, the middle-aged women were greatly concerned about time obstacles.

*Class Is Significant Regardless of Age in Terms of Financial Difficulties:*

(4) The older and middle-aged women tended to have a stable economic life while the younger adults encountered more financial difficulties. The older and middle-aged women mainly came from a middle-class background where household income tended to be wealthy even if their personal income was low. The worst situation was encountered amongst working-class married women and younger women who both needed student loans and part-time jobs to support their fees and additional costs.
In Taiwan:

Age and Ethnicity Affected on Women in Terms of Educational Opportunities:

(1) The middle-aged women encountered the boys’ preferences in the family while the younger women tended to receive equal educational opportunities from their parents. However, Taiwanese ethnic women’s parents tended to differentiate more between boys and girls’ education than the Mainlanders.

(2) The husbands of the middle-aged women with Taiwanese ethnicity were less supportive. This may be a consequence resulting from Confucianism. The ideology of Confucianism has cemented a patriarchal culture, which ensures men’s superiority inside and outside the family on the one hand. On the other hand, the job market did not favour married women with or even without dependent children until the ideology of gender equality was introduced widely in the society of Taiwan in the 1980s. The gender inequality has lessened among the younger generation but still exists in the job market.

(3) Childcare was considered an issue for middle-aged respondents, both men and women. Most women in Taiwan take the responsibility of childcare upon themselves which may become problematic when both partners are busy. The younger women tended to have one child or none, or remain single. As childcare became more problematic for younger women, most of the younger women in this study remained single.

Among the situational outcomes in Taiwan:

Confucian Ideology Valued Children’s Education Regardless of Age:

(1) Educational activity is valued in Confucian societies such as Taiwan where adult participants reported that children’s education were valued, regardless of age cohorts. The younger participants regarded education as an investment for their further careers despite
their economic condition being weak. Hence there was a strong inclination toward vocational learning that was not found among their English counterparts at any ages in this study.

Among the dispositional barriers, in the UK:

Self-confidence Was Enhanced Throughout the Process of Study Amongst Older And Working Class Women:

(1) Most barriers were overcome amongst adult participants regardless of age because they had moved on to their second- or third-year study by the time they were involved in the interviews. However, lack of confidence remained with middle-aged women who were restricted by dependent children and paid employment. The working-class women were inclined to gain more self-confidence to prove their academic ability.

In Taiwan:

Women Lack of Confidence Resulted in the Type of Course Chosen Regardless of Age:

(1) Both middle- and younger-aged respondents found they lacked confidence when undertaking their study at university. This was caused by the type of courses adults participated in. The negative feeling also came from previous school learning experiences regardless of age due to the majority of participants attending vocational schools or experiencing failure of the University Joint Entrance examination. By contrast, middle-aged men tended to be more confident in participating in university learning. This was because they went on to professional training and obtained a degree at a young age.
Amongst dispositional outcomes, in the UK:

The Outcomes of Self-fulfilment Are Important to Women regardless of Age:

(1) Self-confidence was reported amongst older and middle-aged participants since it was regarded as a significant influence on all aspects of their lives. This was a result of their drop-out of education at an early stage. Also, the older and middle-aged respondents, both from middle- and working-class backgrounds, intended to prove certain abilities in academic study which they had not been expected to have at a young age. A similar response was not found from their male counterparts as males tended to reach their highest possible education at a young age.

(2) Self-fulfilment was reported amongst the older participants for whom ‘learning is for its own sake’. For middle-aged respondents the sense of self-fulfilment influenced their attitudes toward other family members in terms of a close relationship. However, for younger respondents, self-fulfilment means ‘freedom’ to have the type of life they wanted.

(3) Adult respondents showed that as well as the feelings of self-fulfilment gained from returning to learn, they also found self-fulfilment in being someone’s mother/father, regardless of gender and age cohorts.

Amongst dispositional outcomes, in Taiwan:

Self-fulfilment Means Academic Achievement for Women at All Age Levels:

(1) Compared with their English counterparts, fewer have reported that they were self-fulfilled throughout the process of learning, regardless of age.

(2) Middle-aged respondents reported that self-confidence has brought them a new life. Both men and women reported that self-fulfilment has helped them to prove that they are still
useful as men or women of their age. However, for younger adults, self-fulfilment meant the academic achievement which was different from their English counterparts, regardless of age cohorts.

(3) Adult women showed they were self-fulfilled and this was the result of being someone's mother; however, the 'empty nest' syndrome was also found significantly in women in Taiwan. It is possible to interpret that women used to put their own needs after those of other family members, and when children grew up the syndrome of empty nest became apparent for women who had been full-time housewives. It showed they were still looking for a new balance between grown-up children and a new personal life goal.

The above summaries indicate the barriers and outcomes within the UK and Taiwan beyond their social context. Next I move on to discuss the differences and similarities of barriers across the UK and Taiwan.

9.5 Part Three: The Differences and Similarities Across the UK and Taiwan

Structural barriers
Differences

(1) In the UK, the older and middle-aged women with working-class background tended to leave school due to gender differentiation in the school system. Compared with the UK, both the middle- and younger-aged participants from Taiwan encountered the barriers of school stratification and the University Joint Entrance Examination when they left school. None of the participants in this study benefitted from the newly established multi-routes to access to universities.

(2) In the UK, gender inequality existed in schools and, although the situation improved, it still remained for the younger generation. Compared with the UK, gender inequality
decreased among secondary and primary school levels for the younger generation in Taiwan. However, it remained in tertiary education, e.g. graduate and postgraduate studies.

(3) In the UK, older women could not return to higher education until the past decade. Compared with the UK, the middle-aged women from Taiwan either stopped at secondary level or moved on to tertiary education but remained in the vocational college system.

**Similarities**

**Both in the UK and Taiwan:**

(1) The changes of family ideology allowed the younger women to have more freedom to decide whether they would go on to further education.

(2) The younger generation benefited most from the higher education expansion compared with their older and middle-aged counterparts.

**Situational barriers**

**Differences**

(1) In the UK, the family ideology has a close link with class difference. Compared with the UK, the Taiwanese ethnic women whose parents tended to differentiate between boys' and girls' education in the family contrasted with the Mainlanders due to Mainlanders' historical background as immigrants in Taiwan.

(2) In the UK, the older women, particularly, and a small number of middle-aged women encountered situational obstacles from their husbands. Compared with the UK, the middle-aged women of Taiwanese ethnicity had husbands who were less supportive.

(3) In the UK most children are supportive; by contrast, children from Taiwan tended to be less supportive at the beginning of their parents' return to university due to dependency.

(4) In the UK, the older and middle-aged women tended to have a stable economic life while
the younger adults encountered more financial difficulties. The worst financial situation was encountered by working class married women and younger women who both needed student loans and part-time jobs to support their fees and additional costs. Compared with the UK, in general the financial constraints were not mentioned due to the type of course chosen which would lead to further careers and paid jobs in Taiwan.

(5) In the UK, childcare was not cited because most respondents had grown-up children. Compared with the UK, childcare was considered in Taiwan as an issue for middle-aged respondents, both men and women, resulting in the majority of younger participants remaining single.

Similarities

Both in the UK and Taiwan:

(1) The older (in the UK only) and middle-aged women’s education was limited by preference for boys’ education and because girls were needed to help the family economy in the post-war years.

(2) The younger adults found their parents became supportive. The reasons deterring them from moving on to further education tended to be based on personal choices.

(3) The younger generation tended to have less dominant parents in the family and gained more freedom in making decisions for their own lives.

(4) The younger women tended to have a supportive husband due to changes in family structures and the reduced number of children.

(5) The middle-aged women were most concerned with time obstacles.

Dispositional barriers

Differences

(1) In the UK, most dispositional barriers were overcome by adult participants regardless of age because they had moved on to their second- or third-year study by the time they were
involved in interviews. Compared with the UK, both middle- and younger-aged respondents in Taiwan found they lacked confidence undertaking their study at university even after a year of study due to the type of courses offered.

(2) In the UK, the working-class women inclined to gain more self-confidence to prove their academic ability. However, there was no evidence to prove whether ethnicity was an issue in Taiwan.

(3) In the UK, the older women worried about being too old to learn at university. Also, the middle-aged women were concerned that they lacked academic skills. Compared with the UK, such negative feeling also came from previous school learning experiences regardless of age in Taiwan, due to the majority of participants having attended vocational schools or experienced failing the University Joint Entrance examination.

(4) In the UK, the middle-class women, regardless of age, tended to be more confident than their working class counterparts. In Taiwan, the middle-aged men tended to be more confident about participating in university learning than middle- and younger-aged women did. This was because these male participants went on to professional training and obtained a degree at a young age.

Similarities
In both the UK and Taiwan:
(1) The lack of confidence remained for middle-aged women who were restricted by dependent children and paid employment. This resulted from women’s traditional roles combined with the new role of breadwinner and caused psychological barriers.

Dispositional outcomes
Difference
In both the UK and Taiwan
(1) Self-confidence was only found in the older age cohort in the UK since there were no
older respondents in Taiwan.

(2) There were fewer respondents from Taiwan who reported that their current education has led to self-fulfilment compared with their English counterparts. This was due to the type of subjects the respondents attended. English respondents tended to go to liberal studies while their Taiwanese counterparts were interested in vocational subjects.

(3) For the English younger participants, self-fulfilment meant 'freedom' to live the types of life they wanted while self-fulfilment meant 'leading to a further career' for their Taiwanese counterparts.

(4) Both middle-class and working-class respondents from the UK reported returning to learn has proved their abilities in certain ways. There was, however, no such inclination found in Taiwan in terms of social class.

(5) The significance of the syndrome of empty nest was evident amongst middle-aged women from Taiwan. This was not found among their English counterparts, regardless of age cohorts.

Similarity

In both the UK and Taiwan

(1) Self-confidence was found among all age cohorts throughout the process of study in both countries.

(2) The respondents from both countries reported the sense of self-fulfilment which led to self-development.
Chapter Ten
Globalisation

10.1 Introduction

In Chapter Nine I compared and discussed the differences and similarities within and across the two countries concerning three barriers to adult women returning to higher education. Chapter Ten will focus on the term of globalisation as a driving force to see if the causes of differences and similarities occurring in the two nations lie with globalisation. It divides into two parts: firstly, I shall illustrate the effect of globalisation as applied in this study. Secondly, I shall move on to discuss the causes of social changes. Does the term of “globalisation” affect the social changes and make the two countries become convergent? Do the people in Taiwan adjust to global trends but, at the same time, start to develop their local culture with their own Chinese tradition?

10.2 Part One: The Effects of Globalisation

The term “globalisation” is not something simple. Its impacts are mainly discussed for its economic effects. There are various theories of globalisation but there is a simple way to look at it, as Jarvis illustrated (1999: 249): they (the theories) all relate to the power of the economic institution and its effect on the whole world, as information technology and rapid transport systems have turned it into a ‘global village’. The UK and Taiwan are two countries located at the edges of the earth. Taiwan with its own historical background moved away from the Chinese Empire, Japanese colonial occupation, and Nationalism government toward a so-called westernised, or ‘Americanised’ society while the UK is located on the edge of the European Continent geographically and continues its traditional monarchy. These are two
distant countries but in my research on the opportunities and barriers of adult women returnees through different age cohorts have found a similar pattern of social changes over the past four decades. The question will be answered firstly, at the macro level: the development of industrialisation and modernisation has shortened the gap between the two different nations as we have entered the 21st century. At the micro level, the knowledge exchanged through scholars, students or other human activities has helped remove the ambiguity and further acknowledges the two cultures. Women in similar age groups may have a rather different lifestyle in the two countries. However, when the timescale moved to the younger generation, more similarities are revealed despite some individual differences. By comparing the differences and similarities between the adult women returnees in the UK and Taiwan, the term of globalisation appeared to explain the causes. However, not every society fitted exactly into the developmental sequence derived from Western experiences. The women in Taiwan with its mixed historical background seemed to develop their own ways of thinking which also looked like a mixture of western cultures and Chinese traditions on the one hand; on the other, 'there are many changes common to both higher education in Taiwan and that of elsewhere, which suggests that Taiwan's higher education has been affected by the trends of globalisation' (Mok, 2000). What would make this study more significant is the mixed cultural background of Taiwan society where the western cultures and Chinese traditions were well found among adult returnees in this study. This phenomenon may concur with Hannerz (1990) who suggested that 'one of the ways of considering the ideal of global culture is in terms of its being constituted by the increasing interconnectedness of many local cultures both large and small'. Again, the concept of globalisation is understood as the economic and political phenomenon which has in profound cultural implications. Jarvis (2006) indicates there is still a sub-structure which is no longer constituted simply by the economic institution but technology, especially information technology which has lined up space and time. And these form the major elements of the global sub-structure. But Jarvis argues that 'although the
term “village” is also a little misleading since the world cultures are far less homogeneous than those of a single village, yet some theorists have postulated it in this manner— a process of standardisation (Beck, 1992) or MacDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993). He further argues that subculture may exist in the countries of the dominant West, particularly the influences made by Americanisation over the country’s structures and resources. Also despite the individual histories, cultures and languages, the sub-cultures are being exerted on individuals of the society. As he says, ‘the effects of these sub-culture changes are having on the superstructure of each society... But these forces do not exist unopposed since different cultural groups seek to retain their own ways of life. In addition, individual States and national government still exist and that they also seek to oppose or modify the forces of globalisation. This gives rise to both convergence and difference’ (ibid).

Next I move on to the discussion of the causes of social changes.

10.3 Part Two: Causes of Social Changes

Adult women returnees in both countries experienced changes of structure in the higher education system and family ideology. These changes have increased the opportunities for adult women returning to higher education at this stage. In Chapter Nine I listed the differences and similarities across the countries and found that the causes of social change can be summed up into two major factors: the changing role of higher education and greater gender equality. The former allowed adult women from diverse age groups to gain opportunities to study at university while the latter helped improve women’s lives in public and private spheres, thereby enabling more women to participate in activities outside the family.

Firstly, structural changes in higher education: in most western countries, the demand for
manual workers has declined. The manufacturing industries have been replaced by knowledge-based and service-based workers. Work-based learning activities are widely offered among the western countries in order to support the demand for skilled and knowledge-based workers. English adult returnees gained a greater opportunity due to the expansion of higher education where the number of non-traditional students increased dramatically in the past few decades in the UK (See details in Chapter Two).

Taiwan had freed itself from the rigid educational system for women under Japanese colonisation in the first half of the twentieth century and experienced a rapid economic development in the 1970s and advancement with skill-based and knowledge-based professionals since the 1980s. The educational systems are required to meet the demands of its recent industrial development. In Taiwan, a significant higher education expansion occurred between the 1980s and 1990s when the number of higher education institutions increased dramatically, not only the traditional ones but also the technological universities, in order to meet the needs of qualified and skilled professionals in the high technology fields. Higher education in Taiwan has followed the two systems of mainstream and vocational tertiary education. Both types started to provide in-service programmes in the 1990s since there was a need to recruit more students from non-traditional backgrounds to fill the number of places among higher education institutions. Adult women who had not undertaken their tertiary education they returned now. The idea of 'lifelong learning' was launched in the society of Taiwan to promote access to and quality of living for people in Taiwan. However, at the same time the Taiwan government started to be aware of the social influences resulting from the dramatic increase of university students and the expansion of private colleges and universities in terms of quality assurance (Yung, 1999, Field interview, Taipei, December 1999). Again, Mok (2000) argues that 'what really causes the current changes in Taiwan's higher education is far more significantly affected by local forces or factors instead of the global ones'. He suggests that 'not all nations have responded to globalisation in the same
way because of the specificities of national history, politics, culture and economy' (ibid). Therefore, 'we must contextually analyse the interaction between a range of critical shaping factors in the local context and the impetus for change driven by global trends' (Mok, 1999, 2000, see also Chapter Two).

In addition, in this research I found women and middle-aged adults to be the major targets of higher education institutions, especially so in one of the English institutions. As Swain (1995) says, 'the increased life expectancy during the last half of the 20th century is believed to be higher than any increases from recorded history until 1900'. The changing demographics have had a lot to do with continuous lifelong learning by adults (Crawford, 2004). Will global trends for higher education include the middle-aged and older student body in the next decades?

Secondly, gender equality technically improved with the advanced technology in households, the increased opportunities in education and the greater number of women involved in paid jobs during the past few decades. Adult women returned to higher education are at a life stage that may probably link to their life transition (i.e. children grown up; looking for advanced employment or retirement) and cultural forces (see also Chapter Two). A growth that Castells calls a 'a massive incorporation of women in paid work' throughout the world (1996:253). Women's increased participation in paid work provides the feeling of being free from their family or other commitments, a space and time where women can be the dominant figure in their lives and in some way enjoy the social relationship with other women (see also Chapter Two). In Beck's risk society (1992: 110-111) women tend to have freed themselves from their traditional traits as the result of these five conditions: the increasing of life expectancy, restructured housework, contraceptive and family planning measures (as well as the legal possibility of terminating pregnancies), the fragility of marital and family support and the equalisation of educational opportunities. [original italics]

Women in Taiwan are rooted in Confucian tradition but some of its negative impacts resulted
in women’s status being inferior to men’s. The ideology of filial piety and authority lying with the older male still exists in the modern family in Taiwan. As a result, gender equality cannot simply be measured by the increased opportunities in education and females’ greater involvement in the job market. The ideology of preference of sons over daughters, even if removed from the old ideology, has remained in women’s daily lives especially for some middle-aged women whose mothers were brought up in Japanese-style education during the Japanese colonisation. The tenets of Japanese ideology have influenced their behaviour as mother and wife. Moreover, women from different ethnic backgrounds may also slow the process of equality between men and women, not only in the private sphere but also in public.

As mentioned earlier, women of Taiwanese origin may encounter the woman’s role as inferior to men’s due to women’s future marriage which is not regarded as a rewarding career. In the extended family, the mother-in-law tended to have the most authentic power in the family, sometimes even higher than the father-in-law. As a result the daughter-in-law was supposed to be obedient and compromised in the family regardless of her educational level. The conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law started to be less commonly seen when the family structure changed to that of nuclear family, especially among the younger women who inclined to adopt the western ideology; European, American or even Japanese cultures are seen as useful or of more practical knowledge. Confucian ideology on women’s roles may start to be challenged by the younger generation. However, it is always a struggle between east and west for these women who favour western cultures in terms of gender equality. Again, Manuel Castells (1997) suggests that the feminisation of employment, together with new reproductive technologies, the feminist movement and the global culture in which idea quickly spread, pose a challenge to patriarchalism. What Castells implied was that the feminisation of employment places an ‘unbearable burden on women’s lives as the paid work is generally added on their other roles, it increases women’s bargaining power relative to men and undermines men’s role as sole or main provider’ (page 136, see also Chapter Two).
In this research the younger generation received more encouragement from their family, both parents and husbands, and gained more equal opportunities in education compared with their middle-aged counterparts. Hence many younger women stayed in education longer than their middle-aged counterparts. Furthermore, the worldwide movement for women's rights has had the effect of legitimising equal education for women and other events in women's lives (see also Chapter Two). Taiwan experienced its rapid economic development particularly in the 1980s. Women's socio-economic position has changed in highly complex ways due to rapid technological innovation, changes in work organisation, growing economic interdependence, and the globalisation of markets and production. During the early years of export-led industrialisation female participation was a major resource in Taiwan. Despite the modernisation of Taiwan gender inequality can still be noticed by institutions and employers. In other words, although there is almost no segregation in the sex composition of these industries, women are still under-represented at the higher end of the employment scale, viz, managers and administrators. Global trends caused some positive impacts as 'the increasing household dependence on female income-earning capacity helps to raise the status of women, giving them the potential for greater independence and empowerment' (Afshar 1998: 6).

There is also a trend for men to migrate, nationally and internationally, in search of paid employment, thereby creating an increasing number of female-led households (Chant, 1997). However, the gender roles in the household often lag behind those in paid employment. It shows the resistance from men to accept a possible reversal of roles and domestic responsibilities. The latter may have empowered women. In this research, the younger men and some middle-aged men, possibly of Mainlander ethnicity, started to shift their male role to a neutral one which does not distinguish between genders inside the households. Some of these male respondents tended to be closer to their young children than their wives. This phenomenon suggests that global culture impacts on patriarchalism helped spread the gender ideology worldwide to rework women's consciousness. However, the gender equality tends to
be limited mainly because the ideology of patriarchy is rooted deeply in the social structures and in some men and women’s minds, despite the global impacts having successfully made changes and more and more women feeling empowered as a consequence of equal opportunities in education and independent incomes.

10.4 Conclusion

This Chapter is brief as I simply want to indicate the idea of globalisation as a driving force to interpret the differences and similarities of adult women returnees in the UK and Taiwan. Since these two countries are geographically distant from each other, how could the causes of social changes be similar? The findings from this study show the effects of globalisation in a modernised society like Taiwan (although I used to think that Taiwan is westernised and should be related to ‘Americanised’). Within global trends, a similar pattern of social causes in the UK and Taiwan resulted in structural changes in their higher education systems. And this helped both to meet the needs of their broad society. University is no longer an ivory tower serving elite students. Moreover, modernisation theoretically reduced the gender inequality that occurred in many western societies. However, despite such improvements inequality remained in Taiwan because women’s roles are influenced significantly by Confucian ideology. The younger generation showed mixed feelings which favoured western culture on one side but adopted eastern Chinese cultures on the other. The struggle between east and west shows they may know about a western culture in theory while being a Confucianist in practice. Further, Taiwanese ethnicity became another significant factor that has resisted global trends towards gender equality. Women and men of Taiwanese ethnicity differentiate between men’s and women’s work in the family and employment. In general, although women’s lives tended to be convergent between the UK and Taiwan, traditional
cultural influences have played an important part in protecting them from western trends.
Chapter Eleven
Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

This chapter divides into four parts: in part one each research question will be answered in
detail from the findings. Part two includes a discussion of models drawn out in the light of the
findings. Part three discusses the validity of the findings, divided into the strengths and
weaknesses of the research, the research methods and the methodology. Part four suggests
further research in the given topic.

11.2 Part One: Research questions

1. What are the opportunities and barriers and how have they changed for adult women
   returning to higher education in the UK and Taiwan?

   Educational opportunities changed in both countries when they started to have more emphasis
   in tertiary education on recruiting non-traditional students. In the UK this began in the 1970s
   and in Taiwan in the late 1980s. School stratification deterred adult women from continuing
   further education. In Chapter Seven, Table 7.10 shows that UK respondents went to different
   types of school where state grammar schools were of academic orientation, the others mainly
   vocational. It shows that the less academically inclined did not move on to further education.
   By comparison, the majority of respondents from Taiwan attended vocational higher schools
   which affected their future career destination (see Chapter Seven, Types of School). In this
   study 65% of English respondents had left full-time education at age 16 or younger (see
   Chapter Seven: School Leaving Age), because there were no educational opportunities for
   adult women returnees until the late 1980s. Since then much emphasis has been placed on
demographic trends and in particular the significance of the declining birth rate in the late 1970s, which led in the 1990s to a decrease in the number of young people aged between 16 and 19 (see Chapter Three). In Taiwan, most of the respondents stayed on in education until age 21 or older (see Chapter Seven, Table 7.10). This was because between 1960 and 1970, both private junior colleges and vocational high schools in the private sector grew by leaps and bounds. The significant results showed more and more private higher educational institutions were formed in Taiwan in the 1990s resulting in the expansion of higher education (see Chapter Two). However, this enrolment ratio does not extend to advanced educational levels until 1991. Before 1991 the facts show that female enrolment rate decreased at higher levels. But since 1991 the female overall enrolment rates are higher than male at every level of education (see Chapter Four). Educational opportunities have improved for Taiwanese adult women in the past few decades, but are restricted by obstacles such as the University Entrance Examination. Other factors deterred women from returning to learn such as family ideology, partners’ and children’s attitudes on current education, financial and time constraints and psychological obstacles. In Taiwan, those who failed the examination either went to cram schools or attended the private senior high school or vocational high schools. This situation started to change with the higher education expansion in the 1980s. The University Joint Entrance Examination in Taiwan stratified pupils according to their academic performances regardless of their abilities (see Chapter Nine). Other changes relating to social and gender factors will be discussed in the next section.

2. How far have the barriers and opportunities for women returning to HE been caused by social and gender factors?

In the UK, boys’ educational priority over girls’, and the need for girls’ help to assist with family economics in the post-war period; these were cited as the two most significant
phenomena. Class difference was regarded as a significant factor among English respondents while ethnic differences were a key factor for adult participants in Taiwan (see Chapter Eight). Women’s education was hindered at an early stage due to, firstly, girls’ education not being valued when there was a boy in the family; secondly, when the family’s economic situation was not good, girls tended to be the ones to go out to work to help. As a result, the family ideology of boys’ preference did not only affect girls’ further education but also gender inequality itself (ibid). However, a small group of women in the UK stayed on in further education and this showed the positive impact from parents who helped their children to gain more education at a young age (ibid).

By contrast, women in Taiwan did not stay on in further education on account of boy-preference in the family, and women were not given financial support by their parents to go on to further education after school. As mentioned earlier, as educational opportunities were restricted for women over the past decades, the underachievement of academic performance was an important reason that gave the women participants no right to reject their parents’ suggestion not to move on to tertiary education. Parents in Taiwan may want their daughters to go on to paid work rather than undertaking further education because of failing the entrance examination or other family reasons. In the early days, the patriarchal family in Taiwan tended to regard their daughters’ destiny as working for a few years before marrying away from home. Higher qualifications were not considered as something important for daughters if they were not going to bring their wages to their parents or establish their own future career. In the traditional Chinese extended family, sons took responsibility for looking after their aging parents rather than the daughters (Chapter Eight). In Taiwan, family ideology is influenced by Confucianism, according to which parents want their children to study as much as they can but boys are always the first to be educated when a family suffers privations. Women in Taiwan, particularly of Taiwanese ethnicity, were brought up in such family norm where the ideology of Confucianism has cemented a patriarchal culture, which
ensures men’s superiority inside and outside the family (Chapter Eight).

Husbands’ attitudes are significant for adult women returnees on current study. Both in the UK and Taiwan, they were not favourable. However, differences occurred in different age cohorts, as detailed in the next section. The grown-up children of women returnees in the UK were shown to be more supportive of their mother’s current participation in higher education than women in Taiwan whose dependent children were less in favour of their mother’s learning activities. Similar reactions affected Taiwanese father students. Thus, there is no gender issue in children’s attitudes in terms of their mother’s participation in higher education in the UK. However, it showed men in Taiwan have a more supportive wife than vice versa. The gender inequality remained in the family in Taiwan partly due to the Confucian ideology, and partly as a result from gender inequality: for most men in Taiwan the stereotype remains; in which women should fulfil their duties as wife or mother despite having a paid job outside the home (Chapter Eight).

Another social factor is time obstacles that affected women with dependent children significantly, both in the UK and Taiwan. Time obstacles were also gender factors as integrated with women’s paid jobs and family commitments, due to the gender inequality in family ideology, described above, and husbands’ own attitudes toward education. Furthermore, time obstacles as a dispositional barrier, for example, merged with situational barriers such as a failed examination in the sense that adult participants may have gained less confidence on completion of their current study due to time constraints and their previous negative experience of academic performance. This phenomenon occurred particularly in Taiwan.

3. Do younger women returnees have more opportunities and lower barriers than their older counterparts when returning to HE?

My findings elicited two different results: firstly, the changes of social structures brought
more opportunities to adult women students compared with decades ago. In particular, the younger adult women in both countries gained far more chances to return to higher education regardless of their previous learning experiences. Secondly, the changes in family ideology about boys’ preference have improved significantly in both countries since women from the younger generation have supportive parents and husbands compared with their middle-aged counterparts. In Taiwan, parents’ preference for boys’ education tended to be less apparent in the younger generation, regardless of ethnicity. However, the following issues indicated that the younger generation encountered more barriers than their older or middle-aged counterparts: firstly, English older women were less affected by time constraints than the middle-aged with dependent children and the younger women with a paid job. In the UK, middle-aged women needed a paid job to support their study at university while a tight schedule may cause more anxiety about academic learning. In Taiwan, time poverty was also experienced by middle-aged women as a result of coping with their children’s school schedule and their university study. The constraints of time can also be regarded as the structural barriers in which university institutions in Taiwan have not provided sufficient support for adults returning to learn in terms of flexible timetable and other related arrangements. The younger women also encountered time obstacles mainly because of travel and time management issues between their full-time paid work and full-time university study. Secondly, the English younger respondents with working-class background may encounter more financial obstacles with added costs and rely on student loans to help with their daily expenses. The older and middle-aged women tend to have fewer financial difficulties as a result of their middle class background and stable financial situation in old age. By contrast, in Taiwan financial obstacles were not as significant as in the UK due to Taiwanese adults from both middle-aged and younger age cohorts engaging on programmes that should lead to a further career, and this may make the participants feel more inclined to pay for their learning activity. Also the Confucian ideology of the value of all kinds of education can be regarded as
an impulsive factor for adults returning to learn. Thirdly, the English older and middle-aged women looked confident and knew exactly what they looked for in their return to learning. This might be the result of their life experiences and upward mobility. Although these women looked confident, this was not necessarily from an academic aspect: they reported they had gained more self-confidence through the process of learning. The working class participants also reacted confidently: returning to learn provided them with an opportunity to look for self-identity which they had not discovered before returning to learning (Chapter Eight). By comparison, in Taiwan, both middle-aged and younger respondents reported that they lacked confidence. According to the findings, adults felt less confident because of the type of courses they were undertaking (Chapter Eight). Adult respondents from the UK showed they have gained more dispositional outcomes throughout the process of study at university. Similar results were found from their Taiwanese counterparts; however, the age cohorts tended to be younger. In the UK, there was a significant rise in self-esteem of older and middle-aged females from their return to learning. Self-fulfilment was also mentioned amongst older and middle-aged participants from the UK. By contrast, compared with their older and middle-aged English counterparts, middle-aged and younger adult women from Taiwan showed their satisfaction at proving to be useful by returning to learn (Chapter Eight), a result at their failure to pass the University Joint Entrance Examination. In addition, self-fulfilment was found in the age range between 30 to 50 years in Taiwan compared with the respondents aged 55 and older in the UK. It is possible to interpret that firstly, the majority of respondents from Taiwan were from middle-aged and younger age cohorts while older participants were only found on the English side. Secondly, more educational opportunities were opened up for middle-aged and younger generations in Taiwan (Chapter Eight).
11.3 Part Two: Pat Cross Model and Refined New Models

As described in Chapter Two, Pat Cross (1981:98) classified barriers to participation under three subheadings: situational, institutional and dispositional. The findings in this study reflect the results of barriers integrated from one barrier to another, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Cross’s Chain-of-Response (COR) Model (Figure 11.1) was to investigate the participation in learning activities which should be the result of a chain of responses, each based on an evaluation of the individual position. Cross’s findings are still valid in some sense although this study was undertaken twenty years after her model first appeared when barriers and opportunities were linked closely with participation. Cost of education and lack of time lead all other barriers and are viewed as equal places among the obstacles to education (see Chapter Two).

Figure 11.1 Chain-of-Response (COR) Model for Understanding Participation in Adult Learning Activities
This study found the latter affected particularly the middle-aged and the former affected younger women in both countries. In contrast to this study, Cross’s model investigated the events occurring in a single country, whereas adults’ participation may vary in two different nations and three different age cohorts. In this study of the UK and Taiwan, the changes of societies and structures in both countries in the past four decades increased the opportunities for adult women returning to higher education while some barriers may remain due to cultural or gender inequality in the family and society. Besides, the effect of globalisation is a driving force and there are more similarities than differences among the younger generation between the two countries. Hence, I formulate two new models in the light of my findings in this research (see Figures 11.2 and 11.3) and discuss the factors that did not occur in Cross’s Model.

The following Figures illustrate the ideas of barriers and their relation to other cause factors like opportunities, participation and cultures. In Figure 11.2, when the power of three types of barriers is large, opportunities, participation and cultures will be deterred and become the weaker factors. Here the structural, situational and dispositional barriers are regarded as having equal power. However, whether the types of barrier will be significant for adult returnees will depend on individual circumstances. For instance, middle-aged women with dependent children from both countries encountered dispositional barriers (lack of confidence) and situational barriers (time obstacles and non-supportive husbands). As the three types of barriers impact on individuals, the opportunities and participation in learning activities will be limited. Figure 11.3 shows the resistance caused by cultural factors. Cultural resistance to barriers due to local cultures of each society remained throughout the generations.
Besides, when cause factors such as learning progress, opportunities and cultures are enhanced, barriers will be squeezed like flat tyres (see Figure 11.2) and become less significant. Other factors should be added such as age, gender, ethnicity and class when we move to discuss the differences and similarities of adult women returning to higher education in the two countries. In this study English adult women were affected by their class while women in Taiwan were affected by their ethnicity. Other issues related to age and gender were discussed earlier in this chapter. Figure 11.3 shows the learning activities that have been undertaken for a certain period of time. As a result, the cause factor ‘participation’ will be replaced by ‘progress of learning’. 
In Figures 11.2 and 11.3, structural, situational and dispositional barriers are integrated from one to another. Most of the adult women in both countries encountered barriers such as lack of time which the middle-aged women integrated with the difficulties caused by family commitments and dependent children while the younger women found they had problems in managing paid employment and full-time university study. For older participants, time obstacles were less serious than for other age cohorts; however, it was still considered as an obstacle in terms of participation in learning. The factor of culture became significant as there were no older participants in Taiwan due to the Chinese culture norm that older people prefer staying at home either looking after grandchildren or involving themselves in other social activities to participating in learning activities.

11.4 Part Three: The Validity of My Findings

The purpose of this research was, firstly, to gain more knowledge for adult educators about adult women returning to higher education by investigating the issues of barriers and opportunities for them in two countries. As the adult women in this study were from three age
decades. Secondly, throughout this comparative study, I found women’s lives, particularly the younger generation to be convergent between the UK and Taiwan. However, the Chinese cultures that make adult women in Taiwan resistant to adopting entire cultures of western societies, despite the effect of globalisation, are evident, as discussed in Chapter Ten. Thirdly, ‘adult women returnees’ is still a new term beyond the promotion of the learning society in Taiwan while Britain has a long history of discussing the issues about adult women returnees. Taiwan may construct its own learning environment for adult women returned to higher education but the English experience certainly provides tested knowledge for their Taiwanese counterparts.

11.4.1 The Weaknesses of My Findings

The weaknesses of this research in the light of my findings includes, firstly, that it may almost be regarded as a case study where there are no national samples but where, in fact, I used two or three institutions from each country. Since the findings in this study cannot be generalised over the whole picture happening in both societies, this limits my hypothesis that adult women returnees’ educational opportunities have increased while individual barriers remain due to the gender inequality in schools and in societies. Secondly, there are few disadvantaged groups involved in this study, such as single parents, disabled adults, the unemployed and individuals with low-income households that would provide a different picture from the current findings in this study.

11.4.2 The Validity of the Research Methods and Methodology

The strengths of the research methods include, firstly, that as a researcher with a good
understanding of both countries I could conduct this study in two countries and in two languages which few studies have done to date. Secondly, there are very few studies which have investigated women returnees in a comparative and global context. Thirdly, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to gain a deeper knowledge of the changes in barriers and opportunities for adult women in two countries. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, surveys are not only a common research tool, but also a part of a person’s life experience. The life history approach interviews method is used in this research because it involves the totality of the biographical experience. It helps to discover the ambiguity, process and change of subjects through the lenses of micro and macro views (see Chapter Six).

11.4.3 The Weaknesses of the Research Methods and Methodology

The weaknesses of the research methods include firstly, the lack of access to students and institutions when the field study was conducted in the UK. I had difficulty in finding as many adult students as I wanted from their first and second year on selected degree programmes from Daisy University. Secondly, there were fewer researches completed on similar subjects in Taiwan so that the literature about adult women returnees is comparatively limited compared with English literature. The related literature can be found in Chapter Four. This may also be regarded as the strength of the uniqueness of this study, as mentioned earlier. Thirdly, due to time and distance factors and the design of the original research methods, interviews were only conducted once for each interviewee. Furthermore, when the study was conducted participants were inclined to speak positively, partly because of their anxiety about undertaking academic research, partly because they worried about possible negative results in the future if they talked too much about issues concerning family or institutions. A follow-up life history approach interview would gain more accurate and complex information and may
11.4.4 Further Research Studies Upon Women Returnees

Further studies about adult women from different age cohorts are recommended as follows:

1) This study provides full potential for looking at other comparative research about endogenous issues of women returnees. As in this research three generations were discussed in the UK, the same age cohorts should be available for study in Taiwan.

2) Globalisation presents a fundamental issue about whether there is or can be a standardisation of women’s opportunities between countries with similar historical and cultural background. Cultural resistance was apparent among the younger generation in Taiwan. Thus, there are questions coming out of this study about the relationship between globalisation and women returnees from the Asian countries.

3) A comparative study about adult returnees from disadvantaged groups, such as single parents, low social economic status resulting from unemployment and retired people would provide a different picture from that of the adult participants in this study.

11.4.5 How did I Come Through

I started my doctoral study at Surrey in the winter of 2000, six years passed, I am now approaching the end of my PhD study. I may regard myself as an adult woman returnee as those I have interviewed in this study. However some of the differences exist between them and me: firstly, I am not always far from the academic environment in the past ten years since I was either studying in a higher education institution or was working there. Academic environment is where I am familiar with unlike most of participants from the two nations in
this study. Secondly, I am undertaking a postgraduate study in a foreign country when adult women returnees I met were at their first or second years of undergraduate studies, and all were home-based students. The different levels of study, and context of study all show differences in terms of barriers and opportunities return to learn. Thirdly, my vocational orientation made me apparently different from those English returnees but may intend to inclined to those returnees I found in Taiwan.

Similarly the educational opportunity was opened up for younger adults in my generation. And there is a feeling of self-fulfillment through the process of my doctoral study. Besides, as a full-time staff and a part-time PhD student, the time pressure and the amount of expenses I devoted to my travels were something hardly to be understood until I experienced them personally. I found it difficult to maintain both the study schedule of my writing up and my family and working schedules. I found it difficult to be fully responsible daughter of my aging parents when dealing with my university teaching. And I believe the reluctant feeling are facing by thousands and hundreds of women, like me, nowadays in Taiwan, on the one hand, on the other hand, I am pleased to have a supportive and understandable family with whom my doctoral study and work at university shall be able to move on smoother. To sum up, the barriers may improve or overcome after the changes of society, attitudes from family do matter women students.
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18 October 2001

Dear student,

I am currently doing my doctoral studies at University of Surrey. I am undertaking research into the decision-making, experiences and outcomes of mature (women) students return to higher education. It would be very helpful to have your impressions of your experience being a student in Higher Education. However, I do not mean an account of the course, rather what happened to you, your personal response. I would be grateful if you would share your experience with me in the following ways:

Firstly, would you please complete the attached questionnaire at your earliest convenience and return it to me or send it to me with the stamped envelop before the 31st October 2001 if possible. Secondly, I would be very pleased if you would assist me in my research by attending an interview with me in October and November.

The information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Whatever you write is confidential and your anonymity is guaranteed. Your contributions would be a valued and respected part of my programme of research.

Best wishes for your continued success and future happiness.

Yours sincerely,

Chia-Ming Yen

School of Educational Studies
University of Surrey
Email: c.yen@surrey.ac.uk
Telephone: 0870-2822844
Questionnaire

I am currently undertaking my doctoral research into mature students' experience of returning to education with special references to women. I would, therefore, be grateful if you would complete the questionnaire below at your earliest convenience and return to your tutor or to me. Should you require any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. With sincere thanks and best wishes.

Chia-Ming Yen

I. In this section I would like you to tell me about your earlier education.

Q1. Thinking back to your school-days, what was the last type of school that you attended?

*Note: this question is about school attendance; if you went to college or university after leaving school, this will be covered later.

- Elementary
- Secondary Modern
- Secondary Technical/Commercial
- Comprehensive
- State Grammar
- Direct Grant Grammar
- Public or other Independent School
- Sixth Form College
- School outside U.K.
- Other (Please write in)

Q2. How old were you when you left school? ________ years old

Q3. What did you do next after leaving school? (tick one box only)

- Full-time work with some part-time study
- Full-time work with no study
- Full-time work and part-time study
- Full-time higher education (e.g. in a university, polytechnic, college of education etc.)
- Full-time study to A-levels or other school-type exams.
- Other full-time study (e.g. technical, F.E. college, secretarial course etc.)
- Became a full-time houseperson
- Became unemployed
- Other (Please write in)

Q4. If you tick full-time study above, how old were you when you finished your initial full-time education? ________ years old.
Q5. Please indicate the highest level of qualification that you held at the time you left school. (Tick one box only)
- No qualification gained at school
- OSE passes or equivalent
- GCSE passes
- OGCSE O-level or equivalent (please give the number of passes ___)
- OGCSE A-level or equivalent (please give the number of passes ___)
- Other (Please write in)

**If you stayed on at school until the end of the sixth form, please go to Q8***

Q6. At the time you left school, would you have liked to stay on longer or not?
- Definitely yes
- On balance, yes
- On balance, no
- Definitely no

Q7. Why did you leave when you did? (tick one box for each statement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need to earn a wage to help my family.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to earn my own living.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents encouraged me to leave.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was offered a good job.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had enough schooling for the kind of job/course I wanted</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had not got the qualifications to continue.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was advised to leave by my school/teacher.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school didn’t provide the courses I wanted.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school had no sixth form.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I disliked my school.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had had enough of studying/being a student.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal reasons (e.g. marriage, pregnancy, ill-health).</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had reached compulsory school leaving age.</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please write in)</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8. Apart from your current studies, have you completed any courses since leaving school which normally lead to a recognized qualification or certificate? (These may include ONC, professional qualifications, GCE, diplomas etc.)
- Yes.
- No.

If "Yes", please give details of up to two of these courses in the grid below, starting with the earliest and working through to the most recent one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of institution Providing the course(1)</th>
<th>Qualification aimed for (2)</th>
<th>Major subject(s) taken</th>
<th>Result (Pass, Fail or grade)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. College</td>
<td>A levels</td>
<td>History, Geography</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q9. How did your parents feel about your education? How would you describe their attitudes during your last years of schooling? (Please read the statements below and tick the one which is most applicable for each of your parents)

- Wanted me to gain as much as I could from education
- Supported any efforts that I made but didn't push me
- Not particularly interested in my education
- Considered my education to be a waste of time
- Don't know/not applicable

II. This section concerns jobs—past, present and future
(Whenever possible, please give full job titles including rank or grade where applicable)

Q10. Which of the following best describes your present employment status? (Tick one box only)
- In paid employment (full or part-time)
- Temporarily unemployed, but seeking work
- Full-time housewife/houseperson
- Retired
- Disabled or otherwise permanently unemployed
- Other (Please write in)

(If you are on leave or secondment from your job, please tick the first box.)

If you are not in paid employment, please go to Q14

Q11. What is the exact title of your (main) job? [Handwritten: Telephone]

Q12. Would you describe yourself as:
- An employee
- Self-employed, employing others
- Self-employed, without employees

Q13. How long have you been in this particular post? [Handwritten: 4] years
Q14. (a) What was the main job that your father (or the male person responsible for you) had during the later year of your schooling?*

SELF EMPLOYED PARENT

(b) What was the main job that your mother (or the female person responsible for you) had during the later year of your schooling?*

SCHOOL HELP

(c) What is the present occupation of your spouse/partner?**

N/A

*If not working, please give his/her last job.

If you are a woman with children please go on the next question, others go to Q16

Q15. I would like to know whether you were in paid employment outside the home at various stages in your married life. (Please tick one box on each stage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages*</th>
<th>Yes, full-time employment</th>
<th>Yes, part-time employment</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not applicable employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Before you got married</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) After marriage but before first child was born</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) While youngest child's was/is young (pre-school age)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) During youngest child's school-years</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) After youngest child left school</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. This section concerns about decision-making and your expectations in returning to university.

Q16: Were there any relationships with people that you had to take into serious consideration when you decide to come to university?

☐ Friends
☐ Friends at work
☐ Boyfriend/girlfriend
☐ Husband/wife
☒ Children
☐ Parents
☐ None
☐ Other (please write in) ___________________________________________

Q17: How could you describe yourself returning to university?

☐ Need education
☐ It is an interesting new hobby
☐ Meeting people
☐ Like an holiday
☒ Other (please write in) FULL MINGLE AMBITION - FOLD SENSE, your
Q18: Was there any change in family circumstances that made you feel the need for change?
- Children growing up
- End of marriage
- Divorce finalized
- Other (please write in)

Q19: Did you feel you had anything to escape from?
- Being a housewife
- Routine job
- There should be more to life than housework
- I was terribly depressed working in an office
- Other (please write in)

Q20: What do you expect to gain by returning to education? (Tick one box which fit your situation)
- Qualification for a job
- Qualification for a better job
- Qualification for a different job
- Being on an equal footing with friends/family
- Expand the scope of my relationships with other people
- Education changed me from a subservient housewife to a thinking human being
- Education leads to self-fulfillment in terms of enhanced status
- Learning for its own sake carry its own reward
- Other (please write in)

IV. Finally just a few more personal details

Q21. Are you female or male?
- Male
- Female

Q22. Marital Status?
- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced (When? 1998)

Q23. What is your year of birth?
- 1964

Q24. Would you indicate from these groupings:
   a) The group which includes your own gross personal income (i.e. before tax and deductions)
   b) The group which includes your gross household income?

Annual income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual income</th>
<th>a) Own gross personal income</th>
<th>b) Gross household income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than (20,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20,001 - 25,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(25,001 - 30,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(30,001 - 35,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(35,001 - 40,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(40,001 - 45,000)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(45,001 and over)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q25. Please describe your living situation at this moment.
I live: 
- On my own
- With spouse/partner
- With parent(s)
- With parent(s) in law
- With my child/children
- With other relatives
- With friends/fellow students
- Other (Please give details) ___________

Q26. If you have any children, how old are they, their gender and do they live with you for most of the year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (write in)</th>
<th>Living with you?</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 1:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the end of the questions! Please give me your name so that we know whom the questionnaire is from.
Name (block capital please) ___________

There are certain parts of your life detail with you. If you would be willing to give up some more of your time (about one hour) to talk in confidence about your experience as a mature student, please give me the following details about how to contact you.

Telephone number: 01 ___________ 760
Best time to phone: Mon 6 pm
Email address: a@ic.ac.uk
Address: 41 North Street, E2 6JY

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer this questionnaire. Please return it to your tutors or me as soon as possible.
問卷調查

各位同學：您好，這份問卷將針對成人學生，特別是婦女學生重返大學就讀的經驗進行了解。以下將請您就個人就學、工作情況、返回大學求學的動機等問題逐一回答。你所填寫的所有資料我將僅用於學術研究參考，為尊重您個人隱私，我絕不任意將資料公開或提供給他人使用。您的意見與批評將是我們最寶貴的資料。若有任何疑問歡迎您與我聯繫，最後非常感謝您參與這項研究。敬祝

學業順利

嚴嘉明

英國Surrey大學成人教育研究所博士研究生

2001年11月

第一部份：以下的問題是有關於您前一階段的就學情況。

問題1. 請問您自下列何種學校畢業？
   ○ 國民小學
   ○ 國民中學
   ○ 國民中學補校
   ○ 高級中學
   ○ 高級職業學校
   ○ 其他，請註明：

問題2. 請問您幾歲的時候離開上一階段的學業？

問題3. 當您離開上一階段的學業之後，接著從事：（請勾選）
   ○ 全職工作，並參加日間（夜間）非正式學歷資格的進修課程（請圈選日間或夜間）
   ○ 全職工作，但未參加任何進修課程
   ○ 全職工作，並參加日間（夜間）可取得正式學歷資格的進修課程（請圈選日間或夜間）
   ○ 進入大學（技術學院）就讀
   ○ 備升學考試
   ○ 參加職業訓練課程
   ○ 成為全職家庭主婦
   ○ 待業中
   ○ 其他，請註明：

__________
問題 4. 如果上一題中您的回答是全職工作，請問您幾歲的時候完成上一階段的學業？

__歲

問題 5. 請選擇進入大學之前的最高學歷：（請單選）
○ 國民小學畢業
○ 國民中學畢業
○ 國民中學補校畢業
○ 高級中學畢業
○ 高職/職校畢業
○ 其他同等學歷，請註明：

問題 6. 當您結束上一階段的學業之時，你是否願意繼續升學？
①非常願意
○ 願意
○ 不願意
○ 非常不願意

問題 7. 請問您結束上一階段學業的原因是：（每一題請就是與否回答）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>可選原因</th>
<th>是</th>
<th>否</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我必須工作以維持家庭生計</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我必須工作以維持自己的生活</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>父母親不希望我繼續升學</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我找到了一份理想的工作</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我所得到的知識足以應付工作之所需</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我尚未通過下一階段的入學考試</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>學校老師建議我休學</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>學校沒有我想要的課程</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我不喜歡那個學校</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我不想再繼續當學生</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>因為私人因素（如：結婚、懷孕、或健康情況不佳）</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我已經超過該階段教育的修業年齡</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>其他，請註明：</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

問題 8. 除了您目前的學業外，自上一階段學業之後，您是否曾經參加過其他可獲得正式文憑的課程？
○ 是 ○ 否
如果您的回答是肯定的，请于下表中列出该课程的详细内容：（请依照时间先后次序排列）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>学校类别（注1） (提供课程单位)</th>
<th>該文凭可作为何种用途（注2）</th>
<th>主修科目</th>
<th>修业结果</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(注1)例如：大學、技術學院 (注2) 請詳述獲得該文憑之目的

問題 9. 請問您的父母對您的教育態度為何？您會如何形容他們對您接受教育的看法？（請根據下各題，就父母兩人選出各個適當的描述）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>父親</th>
<th>母親</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>希望我接受的教育越好越好</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>支持我的決定並提供應有的支持，但從不給我壓力</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>並不特別關心我的教育</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>視接受教育為浪費時間的一件事</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不清楚</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>以上的描述均不符合</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

第二部分：以下的問題是關於您過去、現在及未來的工作。

問題 10. 下列描述，哪一項最符合您目前的工作狀況？（請單選）

☑ 受僱者（全職或兼職）
○ 暫時性的工作，並仍在求職中
○ 全職家庭主婦（家管）
○ 退休
○ 殘障
○ 長期失業中
○ 其他，請註明：______________________

如果您從未工作過請您直接回答問題 14.
問題 12. 您的工作是:

- 受僱者
- 自僱者，並僱用其他人員
- 自僱者，未僱用其他人員
- 其他，請註明：

問題 13. 您從事的這份工作有以多久？

問題 14. (a) 請問在您國中、小學階段，您父親的職業為何？

農

(b) 請問在您國中、小學階段，您母親的職業為何？

家庭主婦

(c) 請問您目前配偶的職業為何？

未婚

男性及未有子女者請直接回答問題 16。

問題 15. 我希望能知道您結婚後不同階段的工作情況（每個階段請單選回答）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>階段</th>
<th>全職工作</th>
<th>兼職工作</th>
<th>沒有工作</th>
<th>以上皆非</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) 結婚前</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 結婚後，第一個孩子出生前</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) 最小的孩子未達入學年齡前</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) 最小的孩子就讀中小學階段</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) 最小的孩子完成中小學學業後</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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第三部份 以下的問題是探討關於您回到大學求學的動機與決定:

問題 16. 當您決定回到大學求學之際，與下列何者的關係曾經列入您的考量？

- 朋友
- 同事
问题 17. 下列哪一项描述符合您重回大学求学的动机？

- 需要再进修
- 新的嗜好
- 接触新朋友
- 将读书视为休閒的一种
- 其他，請註明：

问题 18. 下列哪一项家庭因素促使您有所改变的需要？

- 兒女均已长大成人
- 离婚
- 分居
- 其他，請註明：

问题 19. 您認為重回大學求學是基於下列哪一项因素：

- 可暂时卸下家庭主婦的角色
- 转換单调的工作情緒
- 不想讓自己的生活空間僅限於家事當中
- 工作情緒低落
- 其他，請註明：

问题 20. 重回大学唸书，您对这份学业的期许为何？

（单选，请选择最适合的条件回答）

- 为了谋取一份工作
- 为了谋取一份更好的工作
- 为了更换不同领域的工作
- 为了让自己与家人或朋友具有相同的学历
- 为了扩展个人的人际关系
- 重返学校可以让我从一个依附的家庭主妇的角色转为具有独立思考能力的人
- 重返学校可满足我达到更好的社會地位
- 学习为自己带来成就感
- 其他，請註明：


第四部分 最後請您就個人資料背景回答下列各問題

問題 21. 性別  ○女  ○男
問題 22. 婚姻狀況  ○單身  ○已婚  ○分居  ○離婚  ○其他，請註明：
問題 23. 出生日期：

問題 24. 經濟狀況: a) 個人稅前年收入  
b) 家庭稅前年收入

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>收入範圍</th>
<th>a) 個人</th>
<th>b) 家庭</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>低於 250,00NT</td>
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<td>無收入</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>其他，請註明：</td>
<td>佐川</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

問題 25. 請指出您目前居住的狀況：
○ 獨居
○ 與配偶同住
○ 與父母同住
○ 與公婆(岳父母)同住
○ 與子女同住
○ 與朋友/同學同住
○ 其他，請註明：佐川

問題 26. 如果您有子女，請就性別、年齡、是否長期與您同住等問題回答：

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>子女年齡</th>
<th>與您同住？</th>
<th>子女性別</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>子女人數</td>
<td>是</td>
<td>否</td>
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<td>1. ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. ____</td>
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<td>3. ____</td>
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<td>4. ____</td>
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</table>
您已完成以上所有的問題，麻煩您留下姓名、所就讀學校及課程，以協助我們得知這份問卷的來源。

學校：高雄市
課程：

若想做更近一步的訪談，若您願意與我們分享您成人生活的經驗，麻煩您留下詳細的資料，我們將盡快與您聯絡。

最佳訪談時間：

郵件者：

地址：

非常感謝您撥冗回答這份問卷，請您儘速將問卷掛回至任課教師或助教。
1. Can you tell me more about your school?

Yes, it was a co-educational grammar school you have to pass we called scholarship those days and about 10% of children in my year passed it.

**Was it single sex/mixed or co-education?**

Why do you think you left school when you did?

A) I wanted to because with no encouragement from home to do anything else.

B) My father told me I had to.

(Q: you said that your father considered your education to be waste of time?)

Yes, it wasn’t a very educated man himself, it was an element to jealousy, my brother went on to university.

Q: so there’s a gender difference in your family?

Very much.

Q: Are you the only girl in the family?

Yes, we just two. My older brother and me.

How do you feel now about having left school at that time?

I wish I haven’t very much.

What did you expect to do after you left school? Why?

Go to work, full-time because they needed money at home.

*Were you happy with this choice?*

I was at that time, but in respective(??) way I wish I stayed on until the time I want to leave and earn money.

2. What did you do next?

I became a junior shorten typist in the farm facility because I learnt shorten typist same time I did exam at the grammar school.
Did you think in terms of a career?

Not really. I wanted to get marry.

Q: why did you choose this course?

Because my mother told me I could always have a job if I could do shorthand typist.

Did you think of work as a stopgap before marriage and children?

Yes, in my time it was normal when women got married, they generally stopped work certainly when they had first child, and a lot of them never went back. They didn’t go back, they went to part-time which I did my younger son was at school. That wasn’t a career it just earned money.

Or did you see yourself working a substantial part of your life?

No, not work only home.

3. Did you do any course before this one?

I did A-level in English when I was 47. I did courses in college of arts which was new at that time in art.

How did you find out about that course?

I found it from the radio.

Q: was it helpful to you?

Yes, because I wasn’t able to paint and sale my painting. I loved it.

Was the course sponsored by an employer or anyone else?

Q: Did you pay this course by your own?

Yes, by this time I was married to my second husband, I had no financial problems.

How do you feel about taking studies now in contrast to when you were younger?

That’s a very complicated question. I loved coming to university. I feel very privileged be able to do it. But I regret tremendously I didn’t do it when I was young and get the whole benefit.

Q: what do you mean the benefit?

Well to go to university when you’re young is a whole experience. If I’ve done it when I was young I would have completely different comeouts(??) maybe a career, definitely a career.
1. Why did you decide to start this course?

I've been painting for a long time, it's a very solitude occupation I did a lot. I am a widow by this time I really need to be more in the well I thought. When I saw the leaflet about this degree part-time course, I think that's for me.

Did you consider any alternatives to returning to university? Why did you reject them?

Not at time, no. Because I live 10 minutes away since I deal(??).

5. Were there any problems about coming to the classes?

No, I have a dog but my neighbour look after.

Was there anything about your circumstance which made you hesitate in making your decision?

No I don't think it was. I feel free to do it.

Do you have a loan/grant? If yes, who provides it? How are you paying for this year at UniS?

6. Why did you come to UniS?

Because I live ten minutes away. Because of the geographical reason.

In what way do you think you will change while being at UniS?

I hope I'll get a little bit more knowledge, I certainly already got more confidence, because this is the end of my second year, I have to get one of two presentations which I did find terrify. But the second time was less terrify than first time, everybody else is doing it, too.

7. Did you tell people you were doing this course?

Yes, I told every body, my family, my friends.

Q: What was their reaction?

They said 'good for you' really. I think some of them are quite impressed, some of them didn't quite think why bother now, my own family don't think that, my brother thinks I should done it years ago.

Q: Why he thought that?

Because he thought I have been the intelligent to do that, it wasted. And he did. He
never realised I should done it so too.

Have any of your close relationships with people changed at all since you’ve come to UniS? With whom?

No I don’t think so. I can’t think any thing that can be more specific.

Q: some one like your friends..

I don’t talk them about these particularly, my daughter-in-law is also doing a degree so we have a lot in common, she’s doing with Open University. My brother I talk to about it a lot. I did my presentation to him, well I don’t talk to people aren’t interested in.

Q: how do you know they are interested in or not?

Questions they asked which my best friends do it and they are interested in. I suppose some of my less close friends don’t.

8. How are you feeling the course at the university?

I love it. Some may be more than others, I find the tutors are terribly important how I like the course more than the course content almost. Same goes with the jailing(??) with students together, some are better than another. That’s why I found your subject is so interesting or similar. Because some of the courses have been very very good everybody being part of course, another just been not like at all very scraggy. I found that interesting.

The female preference for arts and social science subjects is still quite strong even among mature students. Have you any views about why this should be so?

I started the science course, I started the BSc. Purely because that I thought everybody goes to arts, all my background have been literature and arts, I told myself I go for science because I know nothing about it. The end of first year, I enjoyed it very much than I kept up. But the end of the first year, when I looked to the curriculum of BA course, I thought what’s my doing this for I have much other than they are doing in BA, I am not trying to prove anything in my age. So I switched from the BSc to BA. They aren’t my real interest, you can’t find it really.

Are women (even as mature students) looking for something different (from men) from education?

I think they must be because the main thing I’ve noticed about two sexes is the far more women than men in all the courses. So I don’t know why whether men want to learn when they get older or whether because in my age men want to relax, play golf instead of taking education. That’s case is most of my contemporary friends (men) they don’t generally learn when they retired. I think it’s pity but it’s another interesting thing you’ve found already.
9. What do you expect from your course?
I hope to go on the six years and get my degree not for any reason except a lot of learning, I think it will give me a lot of access action but I will be 70 by then. I won't start a new career I should think (laugh).

What do you expect to gain by returning to education?
Self-fulfilment I suppose really.

Is the idea of self-fulfilment important to you? What does it mean to you?

What makes it possible to cope with all the difficulties of returning to education at this stage?
The freedom I got being by my own, there's no limit to how long I study except I get very tired. I tried to forward it evening classes. Physically tired, I'm not battery sort of person in the morning, I can't concentrate in the evening, that's about my only difficulty, on the other hand I could go on forever learning, but I want to pain as well. So spend some of my time doing painting, I do have family grandchildren, you know that take quite a lot of time. And the course allows me to do everything I've been doing before. The course it puts slightly more organised order.

10. Can you tell me more about your family?
I got two son, my older son is just 40 and not enjoy being 40 he's a sculpture and he's not married, he lives in London. He got next exhibition coming up in L.A. he always gets very tense before that. He was very clever in school. My younger son is married
he's 38, he got a lovely wife who is doing Open University course and two children, Tom who's nearly 10, Hally(?) is 7. I was married twice so I had three step children and six step grandchildren. And I see them all lovely.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What do you enjoy about being a mother? What do you dislike about it?</th>
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<td>Well, it's a very searching question. Tremendous pride and love you have which are greater than anything I think in the world. The constant interest, I got far more interesting things than I do myself to me. And their children, their lives which I try not to live carelessly but do a little bit. What I don't enjoy about is the reverse side matters I suppose, all the worries it brings, hard things they go through, disappointment they have, the problems encounter which they can do much about when they were children, you cannot do anything about when they were elder. Your worry just much. I thought it stops when they grew up but it didn't.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Did you think of motherhood and bringing up children as mother's duty?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, I did, so do my husband.</td>
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<th>Q: do you think mother has more duty than father?</th>
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<td>Yes, I do think even now. I think fathers take much great part they do it more or less. Generally speaking, the certain part they prepare to do. The real problem I think mother is still the major influence, worker in the family.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Some women feel that marriage and children can fulfill all their needs. Others feel that there are other things in life which are equally important, or more important, to them. How do you feel about this?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Motherhood is fulfilling most of their needs in the family but not all, and I think it's very dangerous they fulfilled because my mother was like that. We were everything to her, and that would be terrible burden to children. So I deliberately keep myself apart to that extend, that's another reason really in the background why I'm doing this study. They(children) know I am alright, I am happy my own life.</td>
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<th>Q: what did you learn from your mother's experience? You wouldn't follow her way?</th>
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<td>No, not at all. She was a wonderful mother, most loyal mother. But she was very unfulfil, very fearful and very unhappy.</td>
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<th>Q: why?</th>
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<td>She was unhappy married I think, she also had problems with her father when she was young. I think she was naturally melancholic person, she made suicide.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Q: did she give you negative influence about her experience?</th>
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<tr>
<td>I didn't want to do what she done. I criticised something, I see the problem she had, problem of her own, mental make up, she had to fight indeed but I wouldn't want to be the same. I tried not to be, but in the way that she's almost the model as well.</td>
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11. Can you tell me more about your life?

I was a widow nine years ago, very happily married second time. Husband was older than I was.

Q: how long did it last?

Ten years. We didn't have children together, I had children with my first husband. When he died, I was left enough money but not a lot so I had to move from the big house to the smaller one which I wanted to do anyway. I thought while I'm moving I was 55(57), I was young enough to start another life so I moved a little bit away. I moved half hour away where I was which made I have to meet new friends. I bought an old cottage, neither my husband would ever buy but I love it. I had two dogs already and that started off by joining church which I did few years and was great help. Gradually I met new friends, but it's a hard work, I didn't feel like doing it either.

Q: how many years did you spend to rebuild your new life?

I moved within a year and I supposed with two or three years I had to make new life. It's not quick, it's not comfortable.

Do you think that women get a better or worse deal in marriage than men? In what way?

I would say in my day men got a better deal, but today I think in the way, some ways men got worst deal because they are not considered so great as women, they don't have that status so much. They got to try to fit in with the fact of a lot of women are not feminist, they are very sure with their own lives. I think it's very hard for men to swallow. I think it takes the way a bit men to the menscurity(??). I would rather be woman today.

What about in educational opportunities? What about in jobs?

Educational opportunities, when I was young I remembered I've asked in school I wanted to be of three things; one is a nurse, one is a teacher and one is a secretary. Teacher(in my primary school) said the three things you might to be, I said I wanted to be a nurse and because I couldn't stand blood I knew I didn't want to be a nurse. Because the questions I haven't had any sort of training, the secretary became the only one thing left, I was lucky in so far I did commercial course when I was in grammar school which it was unusual. I learnt all the shorten typing I needed for job. It was a year when I finished all the matriculation exam, I started what they called O-level exam. Because I was in younger of my half of year, I didn't do matriculation one, when it came to do the O-level, I was ready to do shorten typing course, I only took 5 O-levels, I got more but that wasn't enough for any further education.

Matriculation is the old GCSE in my day, you had matriculation in 16, but in those days you have to matriculate, you had to get math, English, French and I think Science subject. You had to get all those specific subjects and others to go on to university. My brother did, then you got higher score in school, and then he took me university exam(??). I wouldn't got any further with what I had, I think probably they didn't know much about the subjects. But I think it was much more a taxing examination which was
very much out of your head.

Do you think it's a good idea for most people to work for a few years before going on to higher education? Was it a good idea for you?

I don't know, I do really. I think the gap is quite good one. No, I don't think I think so. It's not necessarily. I think some gap years can lead you to be a bit depends what you do it and discipline it. People consider themselves more than we did.

Q: Do you think is there any difference between small gap and big gap?

Yes, big gap, you forgot every thing you knew like my case pretty well. It's long long time, 50 years. On the other hand, you don't live in a vacuum, you got into university it does mean you've learnt every thing. I've always been loved reading, so I learnt a lot about people just being a world. University is not the only place to learn.

If you could have the last ten years over again, would you do anything differently?

You pick up the time when I lived with my first husband and married my second, it was the time when I thought I would do differently. But no, I wouldn't done that differently. I think what I might have done differently come here sooner, it took me long time. If I hadn't been approached, I don't think I would done it by myself. That's very important actually. That particular leaflet came to that door.

Q: If you could come here earlier, in which stage would you come?

I'd come straight the school.
问题一

I was studying in shu-de business high school, I only stayed there for one semester because I was not interested in business course and friends from cramb school didn't stay in the same classes so I decided to work part-time. My parents couldn't afford to give me the pocket money, full-time job could help me to pay my tuition fees while I was studying in senior high school.

問題二

離開樹德之後除了升學之外是否有其他的打算?

I started a full time job while I was undertaking my study in senior high school. I got used to the working life and after I graduated from senior high school I had never thought of carrying with my study at college. Meanwhile I was twenty at that time, it was at the age when you need money and I could not stand to ask money from my parents anymore.

問題三

當初為什麼會想要到空大來唸書?

My husband went to South East Asia countries for business trip frequently, I suspected he had a woman outside of the marriage there. In order to de-concentrated myself, I decided to take a course from Open University. However, I had to be aware of my children's schedule in order not to affect their daily life because of the course in
Open U offers a widely flexible programmes, it meets my requirements in terms of timetable, that's why I am here now.

The aim to come to study at Open U is not only can I learn whatever I like to but gain a formal degree.

花了多久時間打聽空大的課程？
大概將近一年，一開始只是很有興趣蒐集報上的資料，碰到我與先生的不愉快為了轉移注意力乾脆就來空大報名上課。

來這裡上課多久了?
一年半。

Of course it does make me feel differently. "Study" was something didn’t mean anything to me since I was in that age. But now I am a mother of three children, and have a gap before going back to my previous study in high school.

實質上的幫助例如說;我的小孩現在在小學學英文電腦，家裡需要買電腦我个人先
來空大學電腦，回家可以應付孩子電腦方面的問題。至於自己精神層次方面的
收穫是我在空大選修教育、心理、文學等課程，也許外表上看不出來我到底學
了什麼東西，很多時候思想上會有所改變，這些思想上的改變是我來空大學習
之後才有的。

The courses help me a lot, in reality my children now are learning computer, I took a
computer course in Open U, we bought a new pc workstation to meet the children's
needs. As for the help for myself, I selected education, psychology and literature
courses this year. Perhaps it doesn't change me much but it did stimulate my way of
thinking. That is what I gained since I have been here.

二專的課程安排不似空大有彈性，而且課程安排的很滿，又不是每一門科目都
是我想學的。對我們這種家庭主婦來說回到一般學校唸書若是學一些沒用的東
西並沒有意義。大學雖然也有修學分的課程但上課時間多半在晚上或是週末，
這些時間都是我小孩子在家的時間，這樣一來時間上我無法配合。現在我都選
下午這段時間的課程上到五點半，然後趕在小孩子六點半安親班下課前接她們
就可以。

I prefer the course at Open University instead of taking course from other colleges or
universities, they do offer some part-time studies at nights or the weekends for adult
students, but the timetable was not suitable to housewives like me.

問題五
曾經猶豫過那是因爲沒有找到理想的學校，我很想在唸書但一直找不到時間配
合得來的。時間上配合得來他就沒有問題讓我感到困擾。
I hesitated to go back to study because I could not find an ideal school which can fit in with my schedule of family. Nothing has bothered me to go back to study except the school schedule.

問題八
我自己負擔進修的費用。空大的學費不貴，一學分八百元，學期修十學分也不過八千元加上買書也不過一萬出頭，我做零時工作的收入還能應付。I paid for my own tuition fees. Actually the fees are not really expensive. I can afford it with the income from my part-time job. I earn my wages as a part-time staff in the shop of my mother-in-law every single morning.

您目前在工作嗎？
應該算是有，早上我在婆婆的店幫忙賺一點零用錢。

問題九
我還沒有選系空大有五個系，其中我比較有興趣的只剩下英文系，還可以配合小孩子學英文，但對我這種英文沒有程度的學生來說選英文系實在是太難了，我曾經在很多時間在英文的科目上，我考出來的成績連我自己都不滿意，其他科目我不必花很多時間成績卻很好。但是我可以選日文系從頭學起，另外我可以再選修英文以便輔導家中正在學英文的孩子。

I haven't decided yet my major in Open University. What I might take as my major could be “Foreign Language” which I could choose my major either in English or in Japanese. Honestly, I am not good in English at all, I feel it will be suitable for me to major in Japanese since all the students in the class learn Japanese from the very beginning. I can still choose English as my option. It also helps me to teach my children at home while they are learning English now.

問題十
基本上我儘量做到不要妨礙別人，我先生和婆婆並不特別贊成或反對我來空大讀書，我先生其實滿支持的，雖然說不想影響他們但是晚上她們都在家的時候我得做作業多少還是影響到他們的生活，我也不時每天都有課所以僅可能的將對他們的影響降到最低，我先生與小孩子都還能接受就是了。

My husband and mother-in-law they don't agree or disagree with my study in Open University. What I have to be aware of is not to affect their daily life pattern due to my study in Open University. My husband seems to support my study. My children they are happy to see my student life as well. On the other hand, I have to say the way of living in my family has been changed somehow since I have been undertaking the study in Open University.

您先生是否問過您為什麼要回來唸書？
之前我跟他提到我的一位同事在二專唸書他說如果我想唸書就唸，也因爲他的一句話讓我畫書的念頭才能真正付諸行動。

問題十二
以課程來說都不錯除了行政之外，每一個課程的情況都很亂，我想是人手不夠導致許多意外情況發生。有些老師的教學與評量很嚴格，我們花了很久的時間準備考試但成績都不理想，不過嘴巴上說說而已心裡面大家還是很肯定老師的教學。
Basically I do think the aims for going back to university to study are different between men and women. As far as I know, the male students who are studying here, most of them have a full-time job before they started the course in Open University. Young female students are most likely to have a full-time job. As for the aim of women in my age (late 30s and early 40s) and who are full-time housewives going back to university to study is mainly for pleasure. Some of elderly male students they came here to study only for fun instead of looking for new career.

Returning to university changed me in the sense of the way of thinking and the behaviour. I can feel I got my own "style" now. My sister-in-law she likes dancing very much instead of taking any courses, she told me she can hardly understand why I wanted to study in Open University. She feels that studying is something that makes her under stress.

I ask myself what am I looking for in terms of going back to university. I cannot say the "degree" is not important to me at all. Sometimes this degree motivates myself a lot while I am undertaking the classes. I believe that study can update people’s mind and it is what I have been looking for in my whole life.

The happiest thing to me is staying with my children. I am very proud of being the mother of my three children. They are my children and their education comes from me. I feel I have done a good job to be their mom.

What I don’t like with being a mom is to be the “middle person” to stop them when they are fighting to one another. I am only upset about this but I don’t hate them since they are still very young and they still like taking my opinions.
Yes, I do agree with that mother has more responsibility in the sense of taking care of their children. But the situation could be different if both of them are working person in the family. Both husband and wife share everything in the house. If the mother is a full-time housewife, she spends longer time than the father does with her children in the house. She has more responsibility to take care of her children. Moreover, she has to keep her eyes on the relationship between father and children. She sometimes has to help the father how to close to their children in the house.

当初是你决定要当全職的家庭主婦嗎？
倒也不是。一直到老二出生前我都是全職的工作，因為老二與老三連接著出生，為了照顧這三個孩子我辭去了工作。

I was not a full-time housewife until my second child was born. A year after I had my third child, then I decided to quit my job and become a full-time housewife in the family to take care of my three babies.

問題十七
我認爲當小孩子還小的時候做母親的可以從照顧子女當中得到成就感，當孩子長大可以獨當一面的就要自己尋找自己的天空了。不懂得適時的放手對孩子會是種壓力對母親本身也會是種負擔。到了該放手的時候當母親的本身得有自己精神支柱方為讓這個媽媽放手一定很困難。所以當一個全職的家庭主婦要轉移生活重心的方式就是要及時培養自己的興趣，讀書並不一定就是唯一的解決之道。不管什麼年齡的男人也好女人也好都應該有自己的空間，這樣才不會小心眼。這是我的想法。

Mother feels self-satisfied by taking care of their children when they are still young, however, when the children grow up and can live independently she has to plan for her own life. If she still wants to keep her children with her all the time, she will become a burden on her children. The best way to be a happy mother when her children grow up is to find out her own interests as early as possible, I am not saying that study will be the only one solution to be a happy mother or full-time housewife. I believe each person has different taste of life, she can find out what she can depend on as a hobby when her children don’t need her as they did before. I don’t think only mothers have to be aware of this issue, fathers can also have the similar problem if they are not prepared to face their life after children growing up. That is just my personal opinions.

問題十八
我認爲這與經濟有關，沒有收入的家庭主婦經濟來源完全仰仗先生無形中氣勢上就差了些。先生是出錢的太太是伸手要錢的人那種感覺與講話的氣勢就是不一樣，只要偶爾磕個一次太太的感覺就會不好而且太太會對講到錢的這種事特別敏感，不論做先生的怎麼樣想太太在家的位稱就是不一樣，時間久了做太太的也會受不了。夫妻兩個人有收入的話發生類似問題的機會就會降低。

開放經濟因素，就台灣整個社會而言婦女的條件提高很多，現在的女孩子也一樣，也沒有以前所謂的“三從四德”。可能女人在婚姻生活中還是得必須忍耐某種不是很公平的待遇，以前的女人可以忍耐十分現在的女人只能忍耐兩分超過這兩分女人就翻臉了。而且比較重視自尊以前的女人比較不重視這些。男人要面子現在的女人也要面子。現在的女性會希望能擁有與男人同等的對待。
depends on the money. If the husband is the bread-winner, his wife cannot be someone independent economically in the family. The wife looks like the dependent because she is the one who asks money from husband. It makes the wife feels inferior status in the family. If they are double incomes family, the wife feels her status is as equal as her husband's in the family.

Generally speaking, women's social status in Taiwan has been improved a lot. Now the young girls are “smart”, they never follow what their mothers or grandmothers did in the old days. However, women in their marriages have to face something which is not fair to them at all. The hardship in marriage hasn't been changed much but less young married women can stand it than ever before.

Women now have higher self-esteem than their mothers or grandmothers had. Women want to be treated equally to men nowadays.

My husband isn’t too bad in terms of the equal status in the family. But he doesn’t like helping with the chores. He never criticize me in front of other people, he knows how to “keep my face” (show his respect on me) in front of other people.

I don’t think men and women are equal in terms of job and education in Taiwan. Perhaps women are not capable in some jobs which need physical strength. For the rest of jobs, I think women have the same ability even better than men at work or on taking the education.

If time allows people to carry on his/her education, there should not have any other barriers to adult students to come to study. Money should be the problem, I think most of adults are lacking the time to study. Gain knowledge and degree would be the two main factors why adults come to study in Open University.

I have never thought about this question, if time can go back to ten years ago, I think I would not go to work as early as I did before. I would prefer to finish my college education first then go to work in later time. If I took college before I started to work, life would be completely different from now. I would meet different people and my way of thinking would be different, the job opportunities wouldn’t be the same either. Friends, mentality and work decided one’s life.